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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



REMARKS
ON
LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE,
HUMAN CREEDS,
AND
THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS,

SUGGESTED BY THE FACTS IN A RECENT CASE.

BY

A LAYMAN OF THE REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH.

“ Who knows not that TRUTH is strong, next to the ALMIGHTY?
Give her but room, and do not bind her : Let her and falsehood grap-
ple : who ever knew Truth put to the worse in a free and open
encounter ? ”

MILTON.

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1826

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REMARKS, &c.

SECTION I.

There may be persecution even in this free country.—The exciting cause of persecution, and the scope of its power.—Design and object of the publication.—Board of Superintendants what.—Short relation of L. B. Van Dyck's case.

IN this free country, we felicitate ourselves on our happy exemption from the evils of tyranny in civil or ecclesiastical concerns. We have, in no respect, felt a prouder pre-eminence, than in the enjoyment of religious freedom. By the provisions of the constitution of this country, we are secured against the passage of laws to create any religious establishment, or to prohibit to our people the free exercise of religion. The arm of the civil authority therefore may not put forth its power to elevate one denomination, or to depress another. We know nothing by experience, of persecution for conscience's sake, waged by the civil magistrate, in these United States; and in as much as ecclesiastical power is not directly exerted against property, liberty, or life, we are ignorant of the enforcement of religious opinions, by the infliction of pecuniary fines, confiscation of property, imprisonment, banishment, or death.

Although the evils of persecution are thus greatly mitigated, the evil itself is not removed. Men form religious opinions in this country, as well as in countries less free; and whenever multitudes agree in adopting the same sentiments, they are very prone to become too positive that themselves are right, and that those who differ from them are wrong. This is bigotry. The progress to intolerance is very easy and natural. And

wherever intolerance of the religious opinions of others has once taken possession of the human heart, persecution will surely follow, if there be the occasion and the power of its exercise.

The *power* of persecution, even in this country, is very formidable. Denying its exercise to the civil magistrate, is only lopping off one of the many heads of the hydra. The individual who, in this comparatively happy land, falls under the displeasure of his own sect, may not be made to suffer the miseries of persecution in its more palpable forms of outward coercion and punishment ; but he may find arrayed against him, the whole force of what there is of ecclesiastical power ; of public opinion under a wrong and malicious direction ; of evil surmisings, backbitings, slanders, hatred, contempt, insult, the opprobrium of heresy, suspension from church membership, and final excommunication. If he be a minister of the gospel, or have chosen that calling as the business of his life, he may, by the force of persecution, even in this free and happy land, be driven from his chosen or actual employment, and in his infirmities or old age be compelled to throw himself upon the charity of the public for the supply of himself and family with their daily bread.

The design of this pamphlet is to lay before the public a history of the persecution waged against Leonard B. Van Dyck ; a young man who, having received his theological education in the Seminary of the Reformed Dutch Church, and desiring to be licensed in that church to preach the gospel, was refused by the Board of Superintendants ; and was subsequently followed up, with unrelenting perseverance, by the whole ecclesiastical strength of the church, until he has finally escaped beyond the boundary of her jurisdiction and the reach of her power. He was persecuted by his own denomination, not for any delinquency in moral or religious conduct, but for what was deemed a crime equally heinous, his *doubts* on certain disputed, abstruse points of theology, which can never have the remotest influence on his affections or conduct towards God or man.

The object of this publication is not so much to vindicate

the young man, (for he has satisfactorily vindicated himself in his pamphlet,) as to make his history the occasion of illustrating that liberty of conscience which is the birth right of every man—of exposing the wickedness of exalting human standards of faith to that place which belongs only to the word of God, and of proving, that a student of divinity does not alienate his liberty of conscience, nor submit himself to the authority of human creeds, by his entrance into a theological school.

The chief actors in this history are a body of men, unknown in the former days of our church, and to this day unknown in any other church. The body is numerous, composed of ministers exclusively, (laymen not being permitted a place among them,) diffused through the whole extent of the church, and embodying the talent and influence of the ministry, of sufficient power, in ordinary cases, to command the vote of even the General Synod; and, at all events, sufficient to protect them from being arraigned before the tribunal of the public, by any clergyman of our denomination, who cannot be supposed to feel indifferent to the weight of influence possessed by the Board, nor to be desirous of provoking the resentment of a body so powerful. As a layman of the church, I am exempt from much of the danger to which a clergyman would be exposed, in attempting to call in question, the correctness of deeds performed by men so high in authority, as the Board of Superintendents.

The students in the Theological School cannot be licensed in the Dutch Church to preach the Gospel, without a previous examination by the professors of the Institution, in the presence of the Board of Superintendents. The board has not the power to license; this right belonging exclusively to classis and Synod. But the classis or Synod may not even *examine* a student, with a view to licensure, without the previous consent of the Board, who hold an annual meeting in the Theological Hall at New Brunswick, for the purpose, among others, of attending to the examination of the students, conducted by the professors of the Seminary. At their annual meeting, in July 1827, Mr. Leonard B. Van Dyck having, with three

other students, completed his term of study in the School, was examined, and rejected by the Board. He subsequently applied to the Presbytery of Columbia, and was licensed by that body. Enraged at this, the Board called an extra meeting of its own members, at the city of New-York, in November, of the same year, and in accordance with suggestions in the Magazine of the Reformed Dutch Church, they, at that meeting, passed resolutions highly censuring the presbytery for licensing Mr. Van Dyck, charging them with having violated the articles of correspondence between the two churches, and requiring them to revoke the license; while they denounce him as guilty of irregular and unchristian conduct; and issue a printed circular letter to the Dutch Churches, warning them against receiving into their pulpits, this dangerous Presbyterian candidate. The Presbytery of Columbia, not rendering obedience to the command of the Board, an extra meeting of the General Synod of the Reformed Dutch Church was called, and was held at the city of Albany, in the month of April, 1828. At that meeting, the Synod refer the matter to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, to decide whether the Presbytery of Columbia, in licensing Mr. Van Dyck, had not violated any of the Articles of Correspondence between the two churches.

The General Assembly convened at Philadelphia, in the month of May, and decided that the Presbytery of Columbia had not violated any of the articles of correspondence. This decision not having been communicated to the General Synod of the Reformed Dutch church, no further proceedings have taken place in that body.

The documents which give an official history of this case, will be found in the Appendix, to which the reader is referred. A more particular and detailed relation of facts is purposed to be given in the following pages, accompanied with such inferences as, in my view, are not only authorized, but obvious and unavoidable.

SECTION II.

Mr. Van Dyck's connections and character.—Entrance into the seminary.—Dr. Milledoler becomes professor of didactic theology.—His dealings with Mr. Van Dyck previous to the meeting of the board.—Persecution no new thing.—Examples from history.

LEONARD B. VAN DYCK was born of parents who are both members of the Reformed Dutch church, and whose respective ancestors, for time immemorial, had been attached to the same church. His connections are respectable, and have evinced their love for the church of their fathers by generous contributions to the funds of the theological school, and by their active support of the institutions of the gospel in the places where they severally reside. He himself became a member of the Dutch church at the early age of fourteen; and thenceforward exhibited a life influenced by the principles of the gospel. His habits were correct, and his whole demeanour unexceptionable, throughout his academical and collegiate course. At the age of eighteen, he entered the theological school, under circumstances deemed very favourable to the acquisition of that knowledge which is necessary to qualify a man for the ministry of the gospel. Possessing respectable talents, an inquiring, independent, but not obstinate mind, and calculated to please the generality of teachers, his friends contemplated with pleasure his future progress and prospects. When he entered the seminary, Dr. Livingston was the teacher of didactic theology. Mr. Van Dyck enjoyed the benefit of his fatherly instructions for only a short period, when the school and the church were called to mourn his death. This bereavement made room for Doctor Milledoler, under whose

tuition, as professor of didactic theology, Mr. Van Dyck spent the residue of his term. Until Doctor Milledoler entered the institution, there had not been the least difficulty or unpleasant occurrence between Mr. Van Dyck and his teachers.

When his term of study had expired, and the examination of the students at the annual meeting of the Board of Superintendants was at hand, Dr. Milledoler requested him with the other students to disclose to him their views of the doctrines they had been taught. A small pamphlet under the signature of Q., lately published, evidently by one of the members of the Board, and apparently a friend and confidant of Dr. Milledoler, intimates that the Doctor's request was prompted by his suspicion of the unsoundness of Mr. Van Dyck's creed. Be this as it may, the request was made; and it was complied with on the part of Mr. Van Dyck, by a written declaration of his sentiments. [See Appendix.] While in that communication, he avows his belief that both as to existence and mediatorship, Jesus Christ is eternal, he expresses his *doubt* whether the term *Son* of God, when applied to him, denotes a natural or official relation; and in regard to the Holy Spirit, he expresses a *doubt* whether *his procession* denotes his natural or official relation; so that he could not say that he believed from rational conviction, that Christ is the natural Son of God, or that the procession of the Holy Spirit is either eternal or natural. He declares his belief in the doctrines of imputation and substitution; and that he adopts the distinction between natural and moral inability, explaining what he understands by that distinction. He gives some views in relation to the atonement, for which the reader is requested to refer to the Appendix, in which he appears to hesitate between the views of those who maintain its general, and those who advocate its limited character.

Dr. Milledoler, having examined this communication, pronounced it to contain material errors. Mr. Van Dyck, on hearing this, and finding by conversation with Dr. Milledoler and the other professors, that his paper was misunderstood, proposed to Dr. Milledoler that he would take back that paper and write another. To this the Doctor not only consented, but *urged* Mr. Van Dyck to write a second paper; at

the same time delivering him the first. The second paper was written and delivered to Dr. Milledoler. [See Appendix, No. 2.] In this paper he declares his belief in the divinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and that between these persons there is a real distinction, but what the nature of that distinction is, he does not know. He repeats in substance the same sentiments as in the first paper on the subject of imputation, substitution, and moral inability, and that, in regard to the atonement, he hesitates between the views of Hopkinsian and Calvinistic divines.

When Mr. Van Dyck delivered this second paper to Dr. Milledoler, he was surprised, as every reader will be, to hear him demand the redelivery to him of the first paper. A request so strange startled the student, as well it might, and prompted him to inquire why he made it. The answer was, that he wanted the first paper to justify his conduct. What the conduct of the Professor had been in relation to that paper; whether he had already been making representations of this case to some of the choice friends of orthodoxy, in or out of New-Brunswick; or whether he had already transmitted copies of the paper to individual members of the Board, and adjured their aid in disposing of the heretic, and therefore wanted the paper itself to bear him out in his representations; or how else he could need the paper to justify his conduct, we must even submit to be ignorant, or indulge in conjecture only, unless the Doctor shall see fit to make a voluntary disclosure. The mystery is not at all lessened by the fact that, when this request was made to deliver the first paper to Dr. Milledoler, he *had a copy of it in his possession*. It seems as though he had copied it as soon as he received it. The paper must have been deemed of vast importance; much more so than the student dreamed, when in the ingenuousness of his soul, he had written and delivered it to his teacher, whom he had every reason to presume would act the part of a friend, and not that of an inquisitor. As has just been mentioned, at the time he demanded the first paper he had a copy of it. He had copied it before he delivered it to Mr. Van Dyck; for we find Mr. Van Dyck refusing to deliver him the paper, and yet the Doctor sends a copy of the same paper to the Board of

Superintendants. For what possible purpose could the Doctor have taken a copy while he had the original in his hands, and could not know that Mr. Van Dyck would ask it back? It is most strange; and our wonder will be yet increased when we read his communication of this matter to the Board.

That body convened at the Theological Hall, on the 11th July 1827, and, as soon as they were assembled, received Professor Milledoler's report, which was in the words following:

"Mr. Leonard B. Van Dyck, of the Senior class, presented to me a paper on the 29th of June, purporting to contain some doctrines on which his views differ from the acknowledged standards and ministers of our church. Apprehending that this document would be submitted to the Board of Superintendants, Mr. Van Dyck called upon me, on the 5th instant, to request the original, that he might examine and remodify it. I gave it to him under the full impression of a loan, and that it certainly would be restored to me. Mr. Van Dyck has, however, since declined to return it, and has presented, in its place, a substitute, under date of July 7th. Having understood that this young gentleman contemplates leaving New Brunswick, without submitting to examination, and being desirous to avoid all misapprehension, and to put the Board in possession of at least some of the facts which have transpired in his case, I have deemed it my duty to present both documents to the Board.

"PHILIP MILLEDOLER.

"*New Brunswick, July 11th, 1827.*"

He does not say that Mr. Van Dyck promised to return the first paper, but that he delivered it to him under the impression of a loan. This impression seems not very consistent with the assertion that Mr. Van Dyck *apprehended* the document would be submitted to the Board, and that therefore he called on the Doctor to request the original, that he might examine and remodify it. If Mr. Van Dyck feared the inspection of that paper by the Board, and wished therefore to remodify it, he must have expected that the modified, and not the original document, would have been laid before them;

and how he could imagine that the Professor would want the original it is difficult to conjecture. Nothing but the Professor's *private* views could have suggested "the full impression of a loan."

That the student had the right to withdraw a paper which he found to be misunderstood, one would suppose could hardly be questioned. There was nothing besides his gratuitous promise that rendered it obligatory on him even to write another paper. Had he been so disposed, he might have demanded the paper without promising to write another, and so have left the Professor to detect his *suspected unsoundness* on his public examination. There is no authority given expressly, or by implication, either in the constitution of the church, or the resolutions of Synod, to exercise this inquisitorial power over the students in the Theological School; and if there are, it is high time that there should be a revision, and such obnoxious powers abolished. It was most unkind, it was cruel, thus to treat a young man who had put himself under his care, unconscious of guile in himself, and not suspecting it in others.

Admitting that the Professor did believe in the first instance that Mr. Van Dyck intended only to borrow, and afterwards return the paper, and therefore thought he might with propriety communicate it to the Board, it was impossible that he should continue to think so, after he understood explicitly from Mr. Van Dyck that he had absolutely withdrawn it.

But the Professor of Didactic Theology, in his Report, has mentioned the reason for submitting the first paper to the Board; namely, that he had understood the young man contemplated leaving New Brunswick without submitting to an examination; and so deemed it his duty to submit both documents to the Board. Admitting that he really believed the student intended to escape from his grasp, and that of the Board, that could not authorize him to violate the plain rules of propriety, by communicating to the Board, as the confession of the student, what he had found to be misconstrued, and had therefore withdrawn, and substituted another. Had the Professor deemed himself a civil magistrate, and dealing with a felon, he could not have been more tenacious of documents.

Here was his mistake : he did, in the exuberance of his orthodoxy, believe he was dealing with a criminal, whom with all the force of his arguments he could not bring, on all points, into the same belief with himself. This was a crime in the eyes of the Professor of Theology, and he seems to have feared, that the young heretic would make his escape. And what could have been the great injury, if he had effected what it was apprehended he meditated ? He could not be licensed by any ecclesiastical body in the Dutch Church, without an examination before the Board ; but he might apply to some association of congregationalists, or to some Presbytery, and possibly be licensed by them. Was it intended, by laying the matter before so powerful a body as the Board of Superintendants, and inducing them to advertise him as an heretical fugitive, to render it extremely difficult, if not impossible for him to obtain license any where ? Or if he should yet apply for examination to the Board, must he come before them, under the imputation from his teacher, of having meditated a flight from justice ?

Had Mr. Van Dyck left the seminary without applying for examination, surely neither the Professor, nor the Board, had any further business with him. Yet some, who pretend to be wise, assert that the student, after his entrance into the Theological School, remains under its jurisdiction for life ; as much so, as a nun is subject to the convent after assuming the black veil. If this Popish doctrine is to be enforced, the student on entering the school, ought, at least, to have as ample notice of the consequences of his entrance, as the nun has of her taking the veil ; or a student entering under the idea of remaining a freeman, will be sorely disappointed when he finds himself a prisoner or slave.

The Doctor must have supposed either that the *two* papers, although in substance the same, would be better proof of guilt before the Board, than a single *one*, by analogy to the rule requiring two witnesses to substantiate a fact ; or he must have imagined he saw a material difference between them. On comparing the two together, an ordinary reader would pronounce them substantially the same, with the exception that

in the first he expresses certain views of the atonement which, under the apprehension of their being misunderstood, he expressed in the second paper in more general terms. And here is probably the secret of the case. These views of the atonement may have been very offensive to the doctor, not at all *coming up* to what he had taught in the Theological Hall. He had perhaps taught that the standards of the church required of her sons the belief, that Christ died *in no sense*, for the non-elect. Mr. Van Dyck, in the first paper, may have been understood to avow a contrary sentiment, though not expressly asserting his belief in the doctrine of unlimited atonement. Indeed, the student, when he wrote the papers in question, seems to have apprehended that on the subject of the atonement, he differed from the standards of the church; but afterwards discovered that he agreed with them.

The object of the Professor in presenting the case of Mr. Van Dyck to the Board, was to apprise them of his non-conformity to the doctrines taught in the Dutch Church. It was very easy of proof, that the student was not prepared to assent to the two points of eternal generation and eternal procession, as both his papers expressly declare the fact. The Professor did not choose to risk the chance of the student's rejection by the Board, on those points alone. He knew that among some of the ministers of our church, and among a goodly number of the members of the Board, there was a peculiar sensitiveness on the subject of the atonement, insomuch that they could not endure, with any degree of patience, a fellow-minister's calling in question their construction of our standards. He might well imagine how they would receive such views, as the first paper contained, from a stripling not yet twenty-one years of age, in defence of the whole force of a three years' tuition in the very school of orthodoxy. The Board might possibly overlook his doubts as to the eternal generation and procession, either on the ground that these were unimportant or unessential; or on the ground that the student's doubts might yet terminate in conformity to the standards. A few years of study with the advancing maturity of his mind, might enable him to perceive evidence of those doctrines which he

did not now perceive ; and in the mean time he might be silent on them in his preaching, as almost every other minister of the gospel is. But the doctor knew that the views of Mr. Van Dyck, on the atonement, expressed in his first paper, would never be forgiven him, by some of the members of that Board—and therefore it was that he was so intent on submitting that paper ; namely, to avail himself of the inveterate prejudices of individual members, and thereby to *insure* the young man's rejection.

These remarks may seem to the reader, if he is unacquainted with ecclesiastical history, perhaps not conclusively warranted by the facts of the case. It may appear to him strange that men educated to the ministry of the gospel, intrusted with the care of precious souls, continually conversant with holy things, presumed to be almost half of their time employed in prayer and reading the pure precepts of God's word, should have room left in their minds for harbouring anger, resentment, envy, or any evil passions—that any other sentiment than forbearance and love should actuate them in their converse with their fellow mortals. Alas ! that stubborn facts should contradict this plausible theory : but it is even so. Ministers of the gospel are after all, mere men ; of like passions with others. They are not peculiarly exempt from inordinate attachments to their own religious opinions. Indeed, it requires much reading of the sacred scriptures, and much of the grace of God, to preserve them from it. Teachers of theology are in a most special manner exposed to this temptation, from the nature of their employment. By the *frequent* repetition of their opinions, they become more and more convinced of the correctness of them, even to that degree as to become impatient of any contradiction. This contradiction is peculiarly irritating when it comes from his student, whom the Professor of course thinks so far, far beneath him. But this spirit is not confined to the schools, nor to the ministers. Any man who is pertinaciously attached to his religious sentiments, so as to be incapable to hear them discussed without having his equanimity disturbed, is a bigot. He must be, in the nature of things, intolerant of the opinions of others, which conflict with his

own. And wherever there is this intolerant spirit, it needs but the occasion and the power, to produce actual persecution.

Turn we then, for a few moments, to history, in proof of my position. The spirit of the gospel is that of peace, forbearance, and love. Oh, how was this spirit inculcated by our Saviour, and the sacred writers. How much was it insisted on by the apostle John, that we love one another. This spirit of love prevailed very much among the primitive Christians, insomuch that the world took notice of them on this very account, and recommended them as patterns of beneficence and kindness. But in the second century, the spirit of intolerance began to prevail in the church of Christ. A great dispute arose as to the day on which the festival of Easter should be celebrated; and many of the minority were actually excommunicated for their non-conformity to the faith of the dominant party. This was, I believe, the commencement of persecution in the Christian church; and from that time to the establishment of popery, the church enjoyed but little rest. Every difference of opinion among the ecclesiastics, was swelled into a matter of great importance; and the majority were pretty sure to use all their power to enforce their own opinions on the consciences of others; not only to censure, excommunication, and deposition—but when the civil power could be made to co-operate with ecclesiastical intolerance, to imprisonment, banishment, and death. What horrors have been committed by the papal power, in lording it over the consciences of men! What rivers of blood have been shed, you well know. But the persecutions in protestant times, and in protestant countries and churches, are not so well known. It is useful for us sometimes to look at that which is very painful for the eye to behold; to recall to memory facts which prove to us the corruption of human nature, and how that nature acts out itself, when men lose the temper of the gospel. Even John Calvin—the great, and I will call him the *good* Calvin, notwithstanding this one stain on his character, was accessory to the *death* of Servetus, for heresy. Calvin doubtless believed he was doing God service. He may

have thought that this was the way in which Christians are to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. He believed that a man was punishable for heresy, even by taking away his life. He was countenanced in this principle not only by the practices of the popish church, but by almost all the fathers and bishops of the church, since the commencement of the fourth century, who esteemed heresy as one of the worst of impieties, and believed it the duty of the civil magistrates to employ their power for the advancement of the orthodox faith. The execution of Servetus was approved by Melancthon, and the pastors of the church at Basil. At Zurich, a pecuniary penalty was enacted by a public law, against such as should suffer themselves to be re-baptized, or should withhold baptism from their children. The law enacted further, that those who openly opposed that order, should be yet more severely treated. A man by the name of Felix was actually drowned at Zurich upon the sentence pronounced by Zuinglius, “Qui iterum mergit mergatur”—“He that immerses again, let him be drowned.” Were it not for the instruction to be derived from history—yea, from the history of the crimes perpetrated by even the great and the good, we would fain wish that the mantle of oblivion could be thrown over those transactions in Switzerland, of which the above are only a sample—and much more would we wish to blot from the page of history what has been done in the land of our own Dutch ancestors. Nor do I now select the deeds of our own forefathers, because they were more heinous than the deeds committed in other countries, under the impulse of religious intolerance; but the selection is made, the more clearly to show the propensity of the human mind to persecution for conscience’ sake; by showing the principle to have been in full exercise among those whom we have been in the habit of esteeming the wisest and best of the human species; namely, the successors of the reformers in Holland itself. The church in that country had reduced to the form of a confession of faith their views of the sacrament of baptism, and expressed their *detestation* of the errors of the Anabaptists, who re-baptized such as had received that ordi-

nance in their infancy, denying the right of baptism to infants. (See our own constitution, page 37, art. 34.) The arm of the secular power having been secured in aid of the dominant church, the Anabaptists were prohibited from preaching, by the imposition of fines, and banishment from the country. All persons were forbidden from letting their houses and grounds to them, under penalty of a large fine, or confinement to bread and water for fourteen days. If they offended the third time, they were to be banished. Whoever was discovered to re-baptise any person, should forfeit twenty dollars, and upon a second conviction, to be put to bread and water, and then banished. Unbaptised children were made incapable of inheriting; and if any one married out of the Reformed church, he was declared incapable of inheriting any estate, and the children were declared bastards.

Deplorable as the above facts are, history records that still deeper guilt has been contracted in the land of our forefathers, by means of persecution for religious opinions, than fines, banishment, and disinherison. The controversy with the Arminians was more furious still than that with the Anabaptists. The Arminian tenets were condemned by a synod very famous in the history of the church, (the synod of Dort,) and in the canons which we find embodied in the standard of our own church. We do not find the whole of the proceedings of that synod in the volume containing the constitution of the Reformed Dutch church in America. The synod of Dort at the same session in which they condemn the Arminians or Remonstrants, and profess to fix the articles of their own faith, exhort the provincial synods to take particular care that they admit none into the ministry who shall refuse to subscribe or promise to preach the doctrine asserted in these synodical decrees. And they most *humbly* and earnestly beseech their GRACIOUS GOD, that the *civil rulers* might suffer and ordain this wholesome doctrine, which the synod hath faithfully expressed to be maintained *alone*, and in its purity. The states of Holland acceded to the request of this ecclesiastical body, so full of what they believed to be *holy* zeal. For as soon as the synod was concluded, the aged Advocate Barneveldt was

beheaded for having adhered to the Remonstrants ; Grotius was condemned to perpetual imprisonment ; and, because the offensive Arminian ministers would not promise wholly and always to abstain from the exercise of their ministerial functions, the states general of Holland passed resolutions for the banishing of them ; on pain, if they did not submit, of being treated as disturbers of the public peace. A few days respite, to put their affairs in order, and provide for their families in their banishment, was unmercifully denied them, and they were hurried away next morning by four o'clock, as if they had been enemies to the country, and not for a moment to be endured in it.

A small specimen has thus been given of the effects of that inordinate religious zeal which succeeded the reformation in the countries of Switzerland and Holland. Other countries partook of the same spirit, and the dominant parties persecuted their opponents. By whom were these persecutions set on foot ; by the laymen or the clergy ? I answer, unhesitatingly, and without the fear of contradiction, by the clergy. Recur we again to Holland. The history of the preparations for the synod of Dort, and the oppressions and bloodshed following it, are distinctly to be traced to the intolerance of the clergy, and to their influence in getting the civil magistrate into their views. “ The prince of Orange and states of Holland were not for confining their protection to any particular set of principles or opinions, but for granting an universal indulgence in all matters of religion,—aiming at peace and mutual forbearance,—and to open the church as wide as possible for all Christians of unblameable lives : whereas the clergy, being biassed by their passions and inclinations, for those masters in whose writings they had been instructed, endeavoured, with all their might, to establish and conciliate authority into their respective opinions ; aiming only at decisions and definitions, and shutting up the church by limitations on many doubtful and disputable articles. So that the disturbances which were raised, and the severities which were used upon the account of religion, proceeded from the bigotry of the clergy.” Beza, one of the reformers.

had written a treatise in Latin, to prove the lawfulness of inflicting punishment on heretics. This treatise was afterwards, but preceding the meeting of the synod of Dort, translated from the Latin into the low Dutch language, by Bogerman, with a dedication and recommendation of it to the magistrates. The same Bogerman was afterwards chosen president of the synod of Dort, and, without all doubt, most cordially united in the prayer of the synod, so strange in our ears, that the gracious God would move the hearts of the states of Holland to tolerate no other doctrine than that declared by the synod. Not only in Holland, but generally throughout the world, the clergy have generally been the promoters of persecution. The laity have other objects of pursuit to occupy their minds, besides the concerns of the church and of religion, which almost exclusively take up the thoughts of the clergy. Laymen do not generally acquire that confidence in their religious opinions, as to be willing to persecute others for not embracing the same. Let me be indulged in another remark. In protestant countries, the animosities of the clergy, and the consequent persecutions, have been mostly directed against their clerical brethren, while the laity have escaped the sufferings, and by the very means have been exempted from one of the strongest inducements to persecute others. Let me not be understood as saying, that we have no laymen in our church of an intolerant spirit ; nor that clergymen must necessarily be persecutors in principle. Very far from the truth are both these propositions. All I maintain is, that from the nature of the occupations of both, our clergy are more in danger of imbibing this hateful principle than our laymen.

The office of a minister of the gospel is highly valued by our people, and justly so. Without a ministry, religion would soon be banished from the world ; and we have reason to bless the Lord, that we have in our connection so many in the holy office, that evince by their works that they have a commission from their Master. But that evils exist, no one will deny. To expose these evils without the prospect of benefiting the church, would be wanton indeed. I do hope to benefit the church, by holding up to view, matters not gene-

rally known, or not duly considered ; and let me now be permitted to crave the reader's patience till he has heard me to the end.

Now then, to return to our subject, the presentation of Mr. Van Dyck, by Dr. Milledoler, to the Board of Superintendants. The evidence has been adduced, from which the writer has drawn the inference, that Dr. Milledoler was determined to prevent that young man from being recommended by the Board for a Professoral Certificate, or if he should not present himself to the Board, that he should be branded as a heretic and a fugitive from justice : and I have also endeavoured to show that clergymen, and those of good characters too, are capable of doing worse things than these ; and that they have actually done them. These pains have been taken in order that the Doctor, or his apologists, may not content themselves with merely throwing the weight of his character and office into the scale against the facts and reasons adduced to prove the charge exhibited against him.

SECTION III.

Proceedings before the Board, with Remarks.

" The bigot theologian—in minute
 Distinctions skilled, and doctrines unreduced
 To practice in Christian love how cold !
 His vain conceits were orthodox *alone* !
 ————— he made trifles seem
 The marrow of salvation ; to a word,
 A name, a sect—gave value infinite ;
 With mortal heresy denouncing all
 Who in his arguments could see no force."

Course of Time.

WE are now prepared to enter upon the case of Mr. Van Dyck, as taken up by the Board of Superintendants in July 1827. No sooner had they assembled than Dr. Milledoler's Report is laid before them: the matter was referred to a special committee of three. That committee had a conference with Dr. Milledoler, and in that conference he could not deny, that the deportment of the young man had been throughout his theological course, respectful and exemplary. They state in their report that having called Mr. Van Dyck before them, he had conducted himself with decorum, with candour, and affection:—that although upon the explanation of the standards of our church, given by the committee on the subject of his doubts, he was in some measure relieved, so far as to be able to retract some expressions in his written statements, yet he retained his doubts on the eternal generation of the Son, and of the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit; and was not sufficiently explicit on the atonement: that he wished to be admitted to his examination with his Class, and submit to the investigation and decision of the Board of Superintendants. The committee farther say, they are aware of the caution and discretion which should be exercised in the reception of candidates for the ministry, especially when the developement of facts suggests them. Yet upon due consideration of the modest

and affectionate conduct of their young brother, the committee say they could see no weighty reasons why he should not be admitted to his examination, and why the whole subject should not be left to the discretion of the Board. This report was adopted, and the different classes were then examined. This examination continued from Wednesday till Friday, and it does not appear that during the course of it, any thing was elicited from Mr. Van Dyck, that gave a different complexion to his case from that presented by the committee.

Now, by adopting the report of the committee, it seems very obvious that the Board *then* saw nothing in his case, as presented in his papers and by the committee, that ought to prevent them from recommending him to receive a Professoral Certificate. If they had seen it, it was very strange, as well as very unkind, to amuse the young man with a three days examination, and then to bring him forward to the exhibition of a public exercise in the church. This course, it is evident, would be calculated only to wound his feelings the deeper, and render his rejection more notorious. The Board certainly then knew from his papers, and from his declarations to the committee, that he did not assent to the doctrines of the eternal generation and procession. Will any one say the Board might hope that he would yet yield those doubts? What! if the Professor during three years' tuition could not convince him that the Bible declared these doctrines, do they suppose that he would become convinced by the examination in the presence of the Board?—It would be uncharitable to suppose that the Board hoped to coerce him into acquiescence, by increasing his anxiety during the progress of the examination, and as the annunciation of his doom was drawing nearer. I do not believe that such calculations were made by them. The committee, it appears to me, were prepared in the feelings of their hearts to have stated in their report—"We cannot find any authority in the Word of God, to reject such a young man as this, although he cannot assent to our entire standards." The student thus came before the Board, from the hands of the committee, in a more favourable light than from the hands of Dr. Milledoler.—And the Board, when they proceeded to

act on the report of the committee, are not found prepared to reject the student for his doubts on the two doctrines specified. That *some* of them were prepared to sacrifice him upon the spot, can scarcely be doubted, when we look at their subsequent conduct at the same meeting, and their conduct at the meeting in New-York. But the leaven had not diffused itself sufficiently through the mass, on the first day of the session—The examination would last some days, and might be spun out, by the Professor of Didactic Theology, to any extent of time, until all things were ready; and that examination he might so conduct, as to forward the point in view. Meanwhile, he could have opportunities of frequent intercourse with the individual members of the Board, and by the various means at hand, such an *esprit du corps* might be excited, and increased, and the courage of the fearful so strengthened, and all things so managed, as to make that tolerably easy, which now would be attended with much difficulty. As has been before mentioned, the examination lasted until Friday morning. The room was then cleared of every living soul, except the members of the Board. After the lapse of some time spent in secret session, the Board put their intentions in regard to the unfortunate student, into the shape of a resolution. Reader, look at it:—"Resolved, that Mr. Van Dyck be called before this Board, and asked whether he has any remarks or explanations to make, on the papers which contain his views and difficulties on certain points of doctrines, as maintained by the Reformed Dutch Church, and whether he is prepared to subscribe, *ex animo*, the standards of the church."

How different the tone of this resolution from the Report of the Committee *adopted* by the Board on Wednesday!—What produced this difference? Did any thing transpire during the *examination*, to show that Mr. Van Dyck differed more widely from the doctrines maintained by the Reformed Dutch Church, than his *papers* purported? No; this is not pretended: for he is to be called on, not to make remarks or explanations of any thing he said in the examination, but to be asked whether he had any remarks or explanations to make on the papers.

The resolution of the Board was intended to *finish* Mr. Van Dyck; they knew it must have that effect. They unlock the door of the gloomy Hall, and the young man on entering, meets the looks of some dozen or twenty reverend clergymen, on each of whose countenances his doom might with ease be read. The question was stated to him in due form—Have you any remarks or explanations to make on the papers you handed Dr. Milledoler, containing your views and difficulties on certain points of doctrine, as maintained by the Reformed Dutch Church? A pretty long question, and embracing several ideas; well calculated to embarrass a young man in such company and under such circumstances. He, however, answered as the Board well knew he would answer, unless his mind had become disposed to yield to the power of coercion, or out of complaisance to the Board. He answered, that the last paper, handed by him to Dr. Milledoler, fully expressed his views,—that is, he still doubted the doctrines of eternal generation and procession;—he still adhered to the distinction between natural and moral inability; and his mind was not more settled on the atonement, than it was when he wrote that paper.—Well then, sir, are you prepared *ex animo* to subscribe the standards of the church? Understand us, sir.—We do not ask this question in a general sense, but we ask you whether you are prepared to subscribe to the 10th and 11th articles of the Confession of Faith, and the 13th Lord's day of the Heidlebergh catechism? Here the student began to muster courage to inquire whether the Board had the right to put these questions. This presumption was instantly put down by the remark, that had it not been a proper question, it would not have been asked him. Of course, it would have been open rebellion to have demurred any longer.—Well then, sir, the 10th article of the Confession of Faith asserts that Christ is not only the Son of God from eternity, but begotten from eternity. Now you state in your paper you are not convinced of this doctrine; and you have just told us that that paper speaks your mind. Now are you prepared to subscribe the article, which asserts that which you say you are not convinced to be true? I cannot, says the student.—Here we

should have supposed the Board might have stopped. They had evidence in all conscience of a non-conformity in the mind of the student to the standards, provided doubt be equivalent to denial. But the Board had to proceed further; the order of the day was not finished.—Mr. Van Dyck, the 11th article of the Confession of Faith, declares that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son from eternity. Now, in your papers you declare you *cannot*, from rational conviction, *say* that you *do believe* this. Are you now prepared to subscribe another paper declaring that you *do believe this*? Of course I am not prepared to say I do not believe, and that I do believe, in the same breath.—Again; the 13th Lord's day of the Heidelbergh catechism, declares Christ to be the eternal and natural Son of God. You say in your paper you are undecided, whether Christ is the Son of God from nature or from office. Now sir, are you prepared to subscribe to this 13th Lord's day, and so have your subscription stand to two opposite propositions? No. The torture is not yet completed. There are more questions yet. As far as we have gone, (the Board may have thought,) we have only convicted him of unwillingness to subscribe to the eternal generation and procession,—doctrines, concerning which, as ministers, we say very little, and which our people therefore may not think very important. And if we should reject the promising young man for *doubting only* unimportant doctrines, we may ourselves be arraigned for our conduct, before the bar of public opinion. We must therefore convict him of non-conformity to the doctrine of the atonement, as maintained by the church. Now, Mr. Van Dyck, we will read to you the 8th article of the canons, under the second head of doctrine, (see Constitution, page 157.) This article, sir, we understand as asserting the doctrine of limited atonement. After hearing it read, Mr. Van Dyck (no doubt much to the surprise and confusion of *some*,) answered that he was prepared to subscribe that article. But, asks a learned doctor, are you not mistaken as to your being able to subscribe that article? Did you attend closely when it was read, and weigh well the terms in which it is expressed? Let *me* read it to you, and emphasize it. This

being done, the wicked student persisted in saying the article met his views. Then in answer to some other questions, he repeats the sentiment that man's inability is *moral* only, but that he applied the corruption of human nature to the understanding and affections, as well as to the will.—Here the Board doubtless thought it most prudent to stop: why so?—Were they afraid that in case they examined further, he would exhibit too much of orthodoxy to admit of his rejection with safety? They had been careful to read to him *every* article in relation to the eternal generation and procession; for they knew they could do that without any danger of his subscribing them. Why did they not do the same in relation to the atonement? Why did they not read to him the answer to the 37th question of the Heidelberg catechism, which asserts that Christ sustained the wrath of God, against the sins of *all mankind*? Was not this so favourite an article with the Board as that in the canons? or did they believe that the student would be willing to subscribe that, while they hoped and believed that he would not subscribe the one they did not read to him? Strange, that they should ask him to subscribe the article which they knew would *least* favour his views, and that they should omit to present him the one which they knew would *most* favour his views. The wonder vanishes if my belief be well founded, namely, that although the Board place the rejection of Mr. Van Dyck, on the ground of his refusal to subscribe the entire standards; yet that the reason which moved them to reject him, was not what the public were led to believe it was; but that his views of the atonement were the true moving cause. His sentiments in regard to natural or moral inability may also have had an influence on the motives of some, as that opinion thwarts some favourite notions respecting man's total helplessness or deadness: besides, the circumstance of the words *moral inability* not being found in our standards. For, to be purely orthodox, it is needful not only to conform to every word in our standards, but also not to go one letter beyond. If you go beyond, by using one word not there contained, you are said to violate "*the form of sound words.*"

The Board then not willing to let the deed rest on the ground of Mr. Van Dyck's rejection of the abstruse and unimportant articles of eternal generation and procession, and having, doubtless, their misgivings that he might not reject the articles in relation to the atonement, did yet reserve another ground on which they might justify what they were resolved to do. Let the reader look back at the resolution of the Board entered prior to the special examination of Mr. Van Dyck, and he will find that they intended to call on him, not only to declare whether he was prepared to subscribe the standards, but he was to be asked whether he had any explanation to make respecting his views on *certain points of doctrine, as maintained by the Reformed Dutch Church*. Now this is something quite disunited from the standards. These standards, it seems, do not always speak a plain language. Some construe them one way, and some another. There is a certain portion of the ministry who assume to be at the apex of orthodoxy, that in such cases give tone to a certain construction. *As they say*, so are those certain points of doctrine said to be maintained by the Reformed Dutch Church; and if these sentiments can be repeated a few times by certain Doctors in divinity, or such as may be on the point of receiving that distinction, or inserted with approbation in "*our Magazine*," they become at once the doctrines of the Reformed Dutch Church. In these cases, the rule does not apply that you may not add one word to the standards. For to every rule there are exceptions, and these men have, by common consent, the same right to fabricate an *additional* "Form of Sound Words," as the Synod of Dort had. And these men have the further privilege of fixing the interpretation of the standards; so that their reading of the articles becomes the genuine reading of the Church. At all events, what is so authenticated may well be said to be *doctrines maintained by the Reformed Dutch Church*. But the Board fearing that Mr. Van Dyck would be rather disposed to adopt his own construction of the standards, as they had seen he was disposed to do in regard to the Scriptures, did not intend to let the matter of the atonement rest on his refusal to subscribe; but meant to reserve the op-

portunity of alleging his unsoundness on that doctrine, as maintained by the Reformed Dutch Church. And accordingly, we find in the concluding resolutions of the Board, that they artfully mix up his *difficulties on several important doctrines*, with his refusal to subscribe the entire standards.

The Board then having finished the special interrogation of the theological student, again ordered the massy doors of the Hall to be closed, so that they might deliberate on the matter, without being under the inspection of the eye of man.

It is to me, strong proof of undue veneration for our standards, which are but the work of men; and of the want of a comparative estimation of the Holy Scriptures, that from the beginning of this business with Professor Milledoler, to the completion of it with the Board, neither he nor they seem to have thought of putting the matter on the ground of the Holy Scriptures. While the student puts his faith on the testimony of those Scriptures, and cannot consent to say yes, when he cannot find evidence of the truth of the proposition from the Bible, they constantly press upon him the standards of the Church. Dr. Milledoler represents to the Board the student's differences *from the standards and ministers of the Church*. The Board, in their first resolution after the report of the Committee, speak of his views and difficulties on certain points of doctrine, as *maintained by the Reformed Dutch Church*. In their interrogations they confine themselves exclusively to the Confessions of Faith, Heidelberg Catechism, and Canons. And now, in their concluding resolution, declaring their decision on the case of Mr. Van Dyck, they state as follows: "Whereas Mr. L. B. Van Dyck labours on several important doctrines, so that he cannot subscribe the *standards of the Church*, Therefore resolved, that he cannot be recommended by this Board to the professors for their certificate." Still nothing in regard to his scriptural qualifications. Now, if the Scriptures are silent on the subject of the qualifications of ministers of the gospel, the Professor of didactic theology, and the members of the Board, could not have any reference to them as a standard of their decision, and then from necessity they were confined to what *man* may have spoken on the

subject. But if the Bible contains sufficient on this subject to lead men of understanding to a sound determination from the Scriptures, then the Board have not obeyed God, in deciding this case on the authority of human standards. That they have decided the case exclusively on human standards, will hereafter be shown to the satisfaction of every intelligent and unprejudiced mind. That none of the doctrines on which Mr. Van Dyck laboured are of essential importance is most conclusively shown in that young man's pamphlet, and no answer has been given, nor will any be given to it. He did not refuse to subscribe any article except as to the eternal generation and eternal procession. That these are important doctrines, will not be advocated in print by any minister or layman of this Church. None will be found willing to stake his reputation for sound judgment and scriptural knowledge, on such a proposition. Dr. Miller, in his controversy with Professor Stuart, does not consider the doctrine of eternal generation so important, but that he could give him his hand as a brother notwithstanding his *denial* of the doctrine. And as to the eternal procession, no one, it is presumed, ever dreamed of its being important, since the nicety of *scholastic* theology has been on its wane in the Church.

But admitting for a moment that a *denial* of these doctrines may be viewed as important, is the *doubting* of these either such a crime, or such a misfortune, as to disqualify a student from receiving a professorial certificate for examination before classis—Is doubting equivalent to a denial? It is so in the Roman church,—why? Because it at once evinces rebellion against the authority of the Pope, or decrees of council. What, say they, can induce a man to express a doubt, unless he is *inclined* to cast off the authority of the church? It is the creed of the church, and if he were not disposed to question its supremacy and infallibility, he would subscribe, although his judgment was not otherwise convinced. The same reasoning is adopted among ourselves. *Our* good men would address the student, and ask him, Do you deny the doctrines? He answers: No; I cannot say it is not so! Why, then really, it is replied, You might, I think, subscribe to the

articles, and not pretend to be wiser than our forefathers? But, says the student, it will not do for me to subscribe any *human* proposition, unless I am positively convinced of its truth—for me to say it is so, merely because I do not know that it is not so, does not comport with my ideas of propriety. I cannot say it is so, until I am convinced of it. But cannot you believe this on the faith of all the Synods, ministers, churches, and good men, that have existed since the reformation? The student answers: The doctrine is either found in the Bible, or it is not. If it is not there, I ought not to assent to it, although all other men believe it; and if it is there, I must see it before I can subscribe to it. To the correctness of my belief of the Bible, I am answerable to God, and I may not trifle on this subject, so as to pin my faith on another man's sleeve, or profess to believe that God's word speaks thus and thus, merely because the church or any number of men declare that it does so speak.

We proceed now to the remaining resolutions of the Board of Superintendents, in declaring their final decision in the case of L. B. Van Dyck. It is strange how, in the transactions of men, the attempt to put on appearances contrary to the reality, defeats its own end. The Board would fain have it believed that their rejection of this young man was not a matter of choice, but a matter of necessity, arising from his misfortune in not conforming to the standards, and therefore, after declaring that, "whereas he has given a high degree of satisfaction to the Board by the praiseworthy candour manifested on the topics on which his mind was not settled, and the attention paid to his studies, and that it is regarded as exceedingly desirable that the way should be opened for his admission into the ministry of our Church," they resolve "that he be advised to continue in the Institution, and pay a particular attention to the subjects alluded to;" and also, that a special meeting of the Board might be called, when his mind should become settled on those subjects. That the different members of the Board had all of them the same views in agreeing to this resolution does not appear to me probable; it is impossible, however, to discriminate between them, as their debates are not recorded in their proceedings, and they

did not permit the presence of witnesses. Doubtless some of the Board viewed the whole of the proceedings as they ought to be viewed—unjust to the student, impolitic as it respected the Seminary, and disgraceful to the Church. The majority on the question of his rejection, may have been composed of different individuals from those who carried the subsequent resolutions. Be that as it may, some fear is betrayed in the latter resolutions, either of the imputation of injustice done to the student, or of danger to the interests of the theological school, from the establishment of a precedent like this, viz. the rejection of a student for *doubting* on unimportant articles in the Confession of Faith. The student must, therefore, be advised to remain in the seminary, and pay particular attention to the points on which he doubted. Could the Board be serious in professing to believe that the student would remain there? What was there to induce him to remain? Was it supposed that a young man of his intelligence could fail to see the spirit with which the proceedings against him had been carried on? Could he have failed to discern that from the time Dr. Milledoler demanded his first paper, which he had withdrawn, to the time he went into the hands of the committee, appointed by the Board, and from the time that committee delivered him up, until his case was finally decided by the Board, he had been treated as a criminal on trial for some serious misdemeanour; and the advice now with so much apparent kindness proffered to him, was nothing more or less than an attempt to incarcerate him in the Theological Hall, and there have his intellects and his faith hammered into due shape on the anvil of the professor of didactic theology; or of being *humbled* into an acquiescence with the dogmas of the school; and of being made use of as a beacon to warn all subsequent students to make the submission of their judgment to the teachings of the school in due time, on pain of like imprisonment and disgrace. The Board, at their second meeting in November, declare that their resolutions at the first meeting must be understood as instructing Mr. Van Dyck to remain in the seminary until his mind should be *finally* settled, and *made* correct; and in their circular they denounce him

as guilty of disorderly and unchristian conduct, in escaping from the place of his incarceration, without the permission of those who committed him to his prison. And the Magazine of the Reformed Dutch Church, (at that time, certainly not yet, disavowed,) treated his departure from New-Brunswick as an "escape from discipline."

Hence, one would suppose, that the privilege allowed Mr. Van Dyck to remain in the theological hall, was not given with so kind an intent as the honeyed words introduced into the resolutions would seem to indicate to the careless observer. The truth seems to be, that the honey was intended for the public to keep their temper sweet under the attempt to abuse their common sense, while it was calculated that the bitter part of the potion could not fail to be tasted by the student, and if he proved refractory in drinking it to the dregs, occasion would be afforded of accusing him of contumacy; and if he should quietly swallow it down, why then a signal triumph would be obtained over that freedom of religious inquiry, which had been so presumptuously claimed by this strange student. Then a complete end would be seen of all religious *speculations*, which had given so much trouble to the professors of didactic theology, and had given so much alarm to some of the members of the Board, and other ministers of our church, who value their opinions very highly for their orthodoxy. The truth is, and the writer has no reason for concealing it, that long before the final examination of Mr. Van Dyck, it was said by the *knowing ones* in the Church, that he was too much of a speculative turn of mind; and it is said, that he has even been advised by some well meaning people, that never were guilty of too much speculation themselves, that he had better turn his mind more to practical matters. And there is very little doubt that Mr. Van Dyck's speculations have been the means of much of the persecution he has endured while in the seminary, and after he made his escape from it. As this supposed crime is, in my mind, a virtue, and as there is, in my belief, a radical error existing on this point in our church, I must be permitted, in some subsequent pages, to make a few remarks tending to place the subject in its proper light.

SECTION IV.

Subsequent proceedings.—Mr. Van Dyck leaves the School at New Brunswick.—Is licensed in the Presbyterian Church.—Members of the Board enraged.—Ridiculous affectation.—Second meeting of the board.—Outrageous resolutions.—Remarks.—Call of extra synod.—Their resolutions.—Close of the narrative.

O love destroying, cursed Bigotry !
 Cursed in heaven, but cursed more in hell
 Religion's most abhor'd.
 The infidel who turned his impious war
 Against the walls of Zion, on the rock
 Of ages built, and higher than the clouds,
 Sinned, and had his due reward ; but she
 Within her walls sinned more ; of Ignorance
 Begot, her daughter Persecution walked
 The earth from age to age, and drank the blood
 Of God's peculiar children—and was drunk ;
 And in her drunkenness *dreamed of doing good.*

Course of Time.

THAT the members of the Board, when they rejected the young student for no other crime than doubting unimportant doctrines, “unreduced [and unreducible] to practice,” *dreamed* they were *doing good*, may be believed by most of my readers ; and that in their subsequent persecution, after they became drunk with party zeal and anger, they continued to “*dream of doing good*,” will be credited by some, who are not ignorant of the nature and fruits of bigotry and intolerance.

When the Board advised the student to remain in the Seminary, aware that he, at least, would consider the advice, though couched in the form of a request, to be intended, in fact, as a command, must have been morally certain that he would not submit to the sentence. He, unwilling for a single day to submit, or even appear to acquiesce, in so palpable an usurpation of power, and such an attempt to coerce him in his religious faith, instantly left New Brunswick, and without delay,

resolved to seek in another church, for a license to serve his Master, in that business of life, to which he had devoted himself, and all that he had. His mind was naturally led to the Presbytery of Columbia, within whose territorial bounds, he was born and bred, and then had his home. To bring his case properly before them, it seemed to him necessary to have some documents, to show his standing in the Seminary where he had received his theological education, and some other statement than his own, of the proceedings of the Board. It could not be expected, that the professors of the school should give him a certificate of his standing there, after the Board had resolved, that he should be refused a Professoral Certificate; and even an unofficial statement, by the two professors, who were not teachers of didactic theology, would have been hazardous in them, and perhaps not very profitable to the student. He was furnished, indeed, with the final resolution of the Board, which, while it gave a satisfactory attestation to his candour, and attention to his studies, at the same time stated, that he had been rejected by them, for not being willing to subscribe the entire standards, because his mind was unsettled on several important doctrines. What these important doctrines were, the resolution did not state. It seemed, then, very desirable, that he should be prepared to show the Presbytery what those important doctrines were, in order to enable them to judge of their importance. Application was accordingly made to a prominent member of the Board, who was present at the meeting, and well acquainted with Mr. Van Dyck, for a statement in writing, to be exhibited to the Presbytery, declaring the reasons of the rejection of Mr. Van Dyck, by the Board. This request was refused, on the ground that such a certificate would properly come from the Clerk of the Board of Superintendants. Application was then made to the Clerk; and he, after consulting with *his friends*, refused to give a copy of the proceedings, *because the board had not authorizd him to give one!* Thus circumstanced, the harassed student had no alternative left, but to submit to the Presbytery a copy of the papers he had delivered to Dr. Milledoler, and the resolution of the Board; and to rest on his own character, for credit with

the Presbytery, as to the residue of the proceedings in his case. The Presbytery, it seems, did believe him, and licensed him. No sooner was this fact known, than the wrath of the Board was kindled against the Presbytery and their licentiate; against him, for contumacy in refusing to remain at New Brunswick, "until his mind should be made correct;" and against the Presbytery, for doing that which they had resolved should not be done by any but themselves; and not by themselves, until he should have been stretched to the dimensions of their bed. Accordingly, members of the Board assumed haughty airs with the young licentiate; charged him to his face, with having acted uncourteously towards the Board, in not submitting to the sentence of imprisonment pronounced against him. The ordinary civility manifested by the ministers of the Dutch Church to Presbyterian candidates, to ask them to preach in their pulpits, must be denied to him, not only by members of the Board, but by others *under their influence*. And such as dared to show him this civility, were charged with despising the authority of the Dutch Church. It is in small matters, such as these, as well as in deeds of greater note and import, that the genius of intolerant pride and persecution manifests itself. Thus,

"Man, proud man,
Drest in a little brief authority—
Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
His *glassy* essence—like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high Heaven
As makes the angels weep; who with our spleen
Would all themselves laugh mortal."

And why was such treatment given to Mr. Van Dyck? Was it the expression of anger, for the insulted dignity of the Board? Was it to humble the pride of the young man? Or was it to make him feel to the quick his persecuted condition, and thus induce him to find relief by coming cap in hand, acknowledge guilt, manifest shame for misconduct, and beg it as a boon to be received into the favour of the Board and the Church? How many minds, ye sons of pride and intolerance, you have by such measures broken down, and thus kept on a level with

your own, God only knows. It was a mercy to you, that you at length have met a mind capable of resisting your utmost efforts to coerce it into submission to your dogmas, or your assumed authority : or else the same omniscient Being only knows to what extent you would not have been hurried on in your efforts to break down the spirit of free inquiry, and that noble independence which knows no subjection but to *legitimate* authority.

As we have already seen, the student was licensed in August. No measures were taken by the Board, as a body, until it was ascertained what effect the uncivil and ridiculous treatment just mentioned had on his mind. Finding him unmoved, and not discovering by their agents any symptoms of recovery from his independence, the Board resolve to assemble in November; and we find them there no longer contriving any schemes of coercion, but organizing open, undisguised persecution. The young man had obtained a license, contrary to their will, and they determine to punish him. But although the hostility of the Board, and their persecuting spirit, was no longer cloaked, the warfare must still be carried on in disguise. They knew that a candidate of the Presbyterian church was entirely beyond the jurisdiction of the Dutch Church, and emphatically beyond the cognizance of this new made Board of Superintendants; and that of course, a vote of censure proceeding from them, would be as harmless as would be a bull of his Holiness against Professor Milledoler. The object was to injure the licentiate in the Presbyterian Church, where he was licensed. Their aim was to seal up his mouth as a minister of the gospel. They knew he could not unite with Episcopalians, nor Baptists, nor with any other denomination than the Dutch, or Presbyterian, or Congregational Churches. They knew well, that he could not, after the treatment he had received, consent to beg admission into the Dutch Church; unless they had reason to believe, that his constitution was as congenial to live and exercise the ministry of the gospel in the fire of persecution, as that of the salamander is said to be, to live in material fire. But still, they affect to believe that he had obtained his license with purpose

to enter the Dutch Church, and that he persisted in that purpose. Had Mr. Van Dyck given any reason for this supposition? Had he preached, or had he offered to preach in any of the vacant congregations of the Dutch Church? Or did they measure his mind by their own; and thus suppose that he could choose to live in contention all his life, while professing to teach the maxims of the meek and peaceful Saviour? True, as a candidate of the Presbyterian Church, he might have claimed the right of preaching in the pulpits of the Dutch Church;—and the same privilege might be claimed by a licentiate of the Dutch Church, to preach as a candidate in the Presbyterian Church. If then the classis of New-York should, in the exercise of their constitutional powers, license a man to preach the gospel, would that authorize the theological professors or trustees at Princeton, or Auburn, to denounce the licentiate as a heretic, under the pretence that he might presume to claim the right of preaching in that Church? And say that he had been refused at Auburn, on the ground as a disbelief of unlimited atonement, and the classis of New-York had then licensed him, not considering his creed or his disqualification, in what light would such interference at Auburn be viewed in our church? The Board could hardly have been ignorant that their proceedings were wholly irregular and unauthorized. Much allowance must be made, I admit, for prejudice and party rage, so apt to blind men in the perception of the principles of right and wrong; but it will not do to be too liberal in this respect, lest you may confound altogether unintentional error with wilful mischief. The Board then post the licentiate as an unchristian, disorderly, dangerous character. They denounce him ostensibly to the Dutch Churches—virtually to the Presbyterian Church; because in the former he had nothing to do, and in the latter the denunciation would have all the effect which the *character* of the denouncing party could give it. They demand of the Presbytery of Columbia instantly to revoke their license, and threaten to bring the matter before the General Assembly, in case of refusal. By these measures the circular of the Board became as public in the Presbyterian, as in the Dutch Church; and the Board

well knew it would be so, and intended to have it so. When the Synod afterwards met in April, not a single member, even of the Board, could be found to defend the circular. All knew it to be unauthorized; but the work had been done. One of the members of the Board, with much self devotion to the cause of intolerance and persecution, professed his entire willingness to turn his back to the Synod, to be smitten in the form of an empty vote of censure on the Board for the issuing of the circular; thus evincing the complacency felt in the deed, and the impossibility of having the effects of the circular recalled by the Synod: and doubtless at the conclusion of the proceedings in November, every devoted son of intolerance was prepared in his heart to exclaim with Mark Antony, after his inflammatory speech on the death of Cæsar had begun to influence the minds of his hearers,

“Now let it work.—Mischief thou art on foot;
Take what course thou wilt.”

After reading the history of this second meeting of the Board, (see Appendix) it cannot be matter of surprise to learn, that all their proceedings were had, and the circular issued, in the absence of the person who was so deeply affected by them, both in his interests and feelings. One would have presumed that a body of men, professing to act in the fear of God, and in love to men, before they proceeded to adjudicate upon the guilt of an individual, and especially a preacher of the gospel, and to pass sentence upon him, would have given him notice of the time, place, and object of their meeting, and requested his attendance. Had he been cited to appear, he might have satisfied them, that he did not suppose a dismissal from the seminary was at all needful, before he could regularly present himself to the Presbytery. He might have satisfied them, that he did not intend to offer himself to the Dutch Churches at all. He might have interposed some difficulties as to the right of the Board to meddle with his license, or with the Presbytery. For these very reasons, it perhaps did not comport with the views of the *leaders* in the Board, to have the

object of their vengeance before them. He might, perchance, have staggered some of the brethren, who were not proof against the claims of justice and reason ; and this might have defeated the whole object of the meeting. I repeat, therefore, it is no wonder at all, that these men went on in the absence of Mr. Van Dyck, and without giving him any notice, and condemned him, in palpable violation of the universally received maxim, that no man is to be condemned *unheard*. It was perfectly in character for them to deny to a christian brother, a fellow-preacher of the gospel of righteousness, and of character as fair as they could ever boast, the privilege allowed in every court, ecclesiastical or civil, to every criminal, whether he be a drunkard, adulterer, counterfeiter, robber, murderer, traitor, or the meanest felon.

The minds of the Board had been prepared for these outrageous proceedings by an article in the Magazine of the Reformed Dutch Church, for October, 1827—the professed object of which was to show, that a denial of the doctrine of eternal generation had been condemned as heresy by the Dutch and British churches ; that it deserved deposition and excommunication ; and that any Presbytery licensing a man who denied the doctrine, violated their duty to God and man. Although the case of Mr. Van Dyck is not mentioned in that article, it needs no eagle eye to perceive that its object was to prepare the Board for energetic measures at the meeting, which was to take place on the first day of November. In this age of coincidences, it may be worthy of notice, that the same Dr. Brownlee, who conducts the aforesaid magazine, was appointed the chairman of the committee which reported the violent resolutions adopted at that meeting.

It was under this load of injurious and persecuting treatment, that Mr. Van Dyck deemed it his duty to lay before the public, in the form of a pamphlet, a short history of the case, with remarks on his own motives and views, and on the acts of the Board ;—and, although written with the mildness and modesty becoming his youth and his situation, scarcely had it issued from the press, before we hear of the call of an extra meeting of the General Synod, to be held on the 23d of

April, 1828, at the city of Albany. The regular annual meeting of the Synod, was to take place on the first Wednesday in June—only six weeks afterwards. But this time could not be lost. The case was one of great urgency. A heretic, of most malignant character, it was apprehended, would, in the interim, make most cruel havoc among the poor sheep of the flock, and “dragoon the church into Hopkinsianism,” unless the General Synod should give a speedy sanction to the proceedings of the Board. The offence, too, of the Columbia Presbytery was so rank, that the least delay in bringing them to condign punishment, would have looked like winking at their crime. If these were not the reasons of this extra call of the Synod, what were those reasons? The proposed Sabbath School Union of the Dutch Church, was indeed annexed to the other case, as one of the subjects of deliberation, at the approaching Synod. But that matter could scarcely have been the occasion of so much haste, as the New-York Union could not well have devoured the children in that short time. Or was there another reason for this extra call? Was it believed that the members of the then present Synod could be counted on as more “honest men and true,” than those of the approaching Synod *might* be, their names not being as yet known? This is a question not for the writer, but for those to answer who made the call.

Whatever might have been the object in the call of that Synod, and whatever may have been the expectations of the Board, in regard to the proceedings to be had there, it was to that Synod that Mr. Van Dyck and his friends had the right to look for that justice which was denied him by the Board. There were men in that Synod who were capable of discerning the violation of all law and justice, by the Board of Superintendants, in their proceedings against Mr. Van Dyck, at their second meeting; and of duly weighing the bearing of their proceedings at the first meeting, upon the rights of conscience, and the true interests of the Theological School, and the Church at large. Yet, under the circumstances of the case, it was perhaps too much to expect from that Synod, among whom were found a goodly number, and

that too of the most influential members of that very Board, whose conduct was to be approved or disapproved. The power of that Board is too great for the safety of the church. Great pains had been taken prior to the meeting of the Synod, that, when assembled, their acts should indicate a middle course, so as to save, as far as possible, the feelings of the members of the Board, who had done manifest wrong and injustice ; and, at the same time, to make some atonement for the insult offered to the community, in their outrageous proceedings. This scheme was carried into effect. The Synod passed three resolutions, (see Appendix) in the first of which they approve of the course pursued by the Board, in withholding the professoral certificate from Mr. Van Dyck, until his doubts should be removed, or the Synod should have the opportunity to pass finally upon his case. In their second resolution, they refer it to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, to determine whether the licensure of Mr. Van Dyck by the Presbytery of Columbia, was in accordance with the articles of correspondence between the two churches. And in their third resolution, they declare that the Board, at their second meeting, had assumed powers not belonging to them, and for which they express their decided disapprobation.

It is much to be regretted, that so venerable a body, as the General Synod of the Reformed Dutch Church, should have approved of the proceedings of the Board at their first meeting ; and it is more to be lamented, that they did not say a word of the *violence* and *injustice* of their acts at the second meeting, and contented themselves with declaring the *want of authority*. The writer of this pamphlet regrets the first, not only as it has thrown on him the task of exposing to the public the true character of the proceedings of the Board at the meeting in July, but also because the highest ecclesiastical judicatory of his church is thus made in measure partaker in the errors of the Board, and which errors he deems and expects to prove, are in their tendency, subversive of right, and in their operation, will be extremely prejudicial to the vital interests of the church. It is not my object to say much in regard to the Synod, nor to treat them with disrespect. Yet I

cannot, from courtesy to that or any human tribunal, consent to surrender the exercise of my reason to their decrees. The question of right and wrong, in this matter, depends on the sense of the holy scriptures of God ; and if the Board have, in their acts, violated the principles contained in the only infallible standard of truth, it is as competent for me to prove it after, as it was before, any decision of the Synod was pronounced.

Immediately after the adjournment of the Synod, a mutilated account of their proceedings was published in the New-York Observer, furnished by a member of the Synod ; in which the vote of censure upon the Board was wholly suppressed. This member of the Synod was also a member of the Board, and had given his attendance at both the first and second meeting.

The General Assembly convened at Philadelphia, in the month of May, and on the matter referred to them by the the Synod of the Dutch church, declared, that the Presbytery of Columbia, in granting to Mr. Van Dyck a license to preach the gospel, had not violated any of the articles of correspondence between the two churches. The annual meeting of the General Synod of the Dutch church was to commence on the first Wednesday in June, then next. It was expected, that the decision of the General Assembly would have been officially communicated to the Synod. Therefore, it was deemed needful, that the members of that body should be *instructed* how to act in the business. This duty, of course, devolved on the editor of the Magazine, as the organ or speaking trumpet of the Dutch church, always acquainted with the sentiments and views of that church. After remarking that the extra synod, notwithstanding their condemnation of the circular, had not left an opening for the heretical Mr. Van Dyck to enter the Dutch church, he instructs the ensuing Synod not to open the flood-gates of error, and be dragooned into Hopkinsianism, by any concession to that dangerous Presbyterian licentiate. The Synod are further directed, in that magazine, "to cut asunder the unprofitable and dangerous correspondence" between the two churches, so as to

do away the facility of offenders escaping from the discipline of our church, getting a license from some Presbytery, and then returning back unanointed and unannealed, with all the errors of eastern theology clustering on them, &c. &c. (See Magazine for June, 1828.) The obedience of the General Synod to these mandates was not put to the test, inasmuch as the General Assembly did not make any official communication to the General Synod, in relation to the matter referred to them. And thus this business must needs be left in "*statu quo*" for another year, unless its extreme urgency should bring together another extra Synod, on the call of Dr. Brownlee and others.

SECTION V.

Mr. Van Dyck's punishment.—His crime, indulgence in speculations, which led him to doubt the standards.—Consideration of this charge.—Definition of the term speculation.—Second crime, his refusal to yield the right, which every man, and especially students have, to examine the Bible for themselves.—Example of Luther, the apostles, and Christ.

—————"For this they met,
 Assembled, counselled, meditated, planned,
 Devised in open and secret; and for this
 Enacted creeds of wondrous texture, creeds
 The Bible never own'd————
 —————(and waving now the sword
 Of persecution fierce, tempered in hell)
 Forced on the conscience of inferior men."

WE have thus given the history of this young man, who had the misfortune of incurring the displeasure of the Professor of didactic theology, for not surrendering his reason to his teaching, and his conscience to his keeping: we have seen him pursued by the Professor into the Board of Superintendents: we have seen that body exercising inquisitorial power, and attempting to coerce him into a subscription to doctrines, which he assured them he could not find in the Bible. We have seen them insist on his compliance as the condition of his licensure, and sentencing him to confinement in the theological hall "until his mind should be *made* correct." We have seen the same Board in their rage, when they found him indisposed to submit to farther coercion, do their utmost to degrade him in the eyes of the Christian community, branding him as a heretic, issuing circulars denouncing him as a disorderly, unchristian, and dangerous licentiate; and doing all in their power, after he had received from another denomination that license which among his own he was not permitted to receive, to prevent his usefulness or his comfort any where. They have effectually succeeded in blasting his prospects of a

settlement in the church of his fathers, among the Dutch people, in whose manners and habits he had grown up, and among whom, for that reason, he had the right to look for comfort in his intercourse, and success in the ministry of the gospel. We have seen the General Synod, the highest judicatory in the church, refuse to wipe away the reproach so unjustly cast upon the young man by the Board, and at least appear to sanction the proceedings of the Board at their first meeting, where the wrong and injustice commenced. By these measures a wound has been inflicted on his parents, under the anguish of which they may descend to their graves.

It is a very natural inquiry, what Mr. Van Dyck has done to deserve such treatment ; what is his crime ? The whole extent of it is this, that he has doubts whether the term Son of God is applied to the Saviour, as designating his nature, or his office of mediator. He admits Jesus Christ to be essentially God from all eternity, and if the term Son of God is applied to him in reference to his natural relation to the Father, then he admits the propriety of the expression in the 10th article of the Confession of Faith, that he was begotten from eternity. But if the term Son of God is used to denote his office of mediator, then the expression in the 10th article is unwarranted ; and in as much as the Bible does not in his opinion decide this question, he could not say that he had sufficient evidence to enable him to form any opinion on the subject. He also doubts the propriety of the expression in the 11th article, that the Holy Spirit had from eternity proceeded from the Father and the Son. Not that he has any doubt that the Holy Spirit is essentially God, and has been from all eternity ; but he is not convinced that the scriptures declare the manner of the Spirit's existence always to have been in a procession from the two other persons in the Trinity. Let any intelligent man examine the passages of Scripture cited to prove these two abstruse doctrines, and he will be surprised after all the noise made, how little light the Scriptures cast on the subject. Now as these are questions relating to the nature and mode of existence of the incomprehensible God, we cannot have any further evidence, than what it has pleased him to reveal

in his own word. All conjectures and speculations of men are idle, and all inferences from texts not in point, are, to say the least, extremely unsafe. On the first doctrine much has been written; and men of the first standing for piety, talents, and usefulness, have advocated different sides of the question. I am not aware that much has been written on the doctrine of eternal procession; and it does appear to me that very little can be said, unless writers should indulge in the wildest and most presumptuous conjectures on a subject entirely dependent on Revelation, and on which that Revelation is almost wholly silent. Both *points* of doctrine have been raised *by men*, and in my view, are calculated to introduce “strife about words to no purpose,” and “ministering questions, rather than godly edifying;” and so condemned in 1 Tim. i. 4. vi. 20., 2 Tim. ii. 14. In Scott’s Family Bible, a work which has been introduced into many Dutch families, through the recommendation and encouragement of the prominent ministers of our own church, there is a very sensible note to the 26th verse of the fifteenth chapter of John. In that verse, the Saviour promises to send unto his disciples, “from the Father, the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father.” The following is an extract from the note of the Commentator:—

“The Holy Spirit is here said to proceed from the Father, and “many suppose this to refer not only to his being sent forth “from the Father and the Son, (as the Son was from the “Father,) a willing messenger to apply the salvation of Christ “to his chosen people; but to what is called his *eternal pro-* “*cession* from the Father; by which is meant something “similar to the *eternal generation of the Son*. But these are “incomprehensible mysteries, and (though *inserted* in most “of the ancient *creeds* and formularies,) seem *not* to be *expli-* “*citly and evidently revealed*.” This extract from Scott, is not made, nor are the preceding remarks made, to prove that neither the doctrine of eternal generation, or eternal procession are founded in truth; but for the purpose of showing that they are not explicitly and evidently revealed, and that, therefore, it cannot be criminal or strange, that good men should entertain diverse opinions; and that, at all events, it ought to be

deemed neither criminal nor strange, that a student of divinity should be troubled with doubts respecting them.* But the student was also undecided whether the death of Christ was for all, or only a portion of the human family. This question has also long divided theologians, who are otherwise of the same sentiments; and never ought to be permitted to occasion a breach of christian fellowship, and which is at least left doubtful in our standards, as will be more fully shown hereafter. No objection, at all events, can be made to the student on this score, inasmuch as he avowed before the Board his willingness to subscribe the article of our church, on that point of doctrine. These are all the doctrines on which Mr. Van Dyck failed to come to the same conclusion with the members of the Board; and these are the "several important doctrines" on which they state that he was labouring, so that he could not subscribe the entire standards of the church, and for which they rejected him, as unfit to be admitted into the ministry of the church!

The Board say nothing in regard to the doubtfulness or plainness of these doctrines; but they allege them to be *important*. This topic has been so fully discussed and proved in Mr. Van Dyck's pamphlet, that I shall content myself in this place with reminding my readers, that these doctrines, (namely, eternal generation and procession, the other being out of question by Mr. Van Dyck's conformity to the standards on that point,) are scarcely ever discussed in our pulpits; the doctrine of eternal procession never to my knowledge. It is not contained in the Heidelberg Catechism; and this omis-

* It was with a very ill grace that *Dr. Milledoler* quarrelled with Mr. Van Dyck for embracing the sentiments expressed in the above extract from Scott's Family Bible, as he has himself recommended that book to all the *friends of Christian knowledge*, as an *instructive, well digested, and purely evangelical work*; as a *treasure of religious instruction*. A good recommendation, but very unfortunate for the Doctor's purpose in this instance; quite as much so as that of a certain professor who advised his student that had doubts on the doctrines of eternal generation and procession, to read Gill's Body of Divinity; and the student found the author arguing indeed for the eternal generation, but *against* the eternal procession. The Doctor might have done as well to abide by Mark's Medulla, and perhaps better to abide by the Bible without note or comment.

sion would hardly have been made, if the doctrine were an important one. Now then, there is but *one important* doctrine left, instead of *several*, on which the student's mind, as the Board alleged, was labouring, and that is the eternal generation. And will the Board and the Synod of the Reformed Dutch church maintain, that a doubt of this one doctrine is so criminal or so dangerous, as to require the rejection of the doubting man from the ministry of the gospel? Then let me assure you, that, twenty years hence, we will have few ministers in the church. The articles will not be taken for granted, as they have been. They will undergo discussion, and some of our best men will doubt. And who will send his son to our theological school, if his licensure shall depend on his believing such disputable and, in themselves, unimportant matters; rendered important only by church power or caprice?

Yes, it is maintained that Van Dyck was justly rejected from the ministry of the gospel in our church, if he doubted any one of the articles in our standards: that he ought not to have entered the seminary, unless he intended to submit his judgment to his teachers, and other superiors in the church. Time has been when a father, sending his son to be educated for the ministry, never dreamed, that he had ought to do but to *learn* what was taught him by his instructor. As to the exercise of his own judgment independent of the teacher, this was not thought of by the father, the son, or the theological professor. If the pupil could not repeat the propositions laid down for him, in the same form they were given, no other reason for such a result could be devised, except that the pupil lacked genius, or a teachable disposition, or that he had not had sufficient time "to be made correct." The least disposition in a young man to reason for himself, differently from the reasoning of his teachers, would have been viewed by his family as a most grievous calamity. So it was in the case of a young Spaniard, educated for the priesthood in the Roman Catholic church. He had the imprudence to express, in the presence of his mother, some doubts whether all the doctrines of the church were true. She loved him; and mourned over his calamity, and her own hard condition. She shunned his company, lest

the repetition of his doubts should constrain her conscience to accuse him to the inquisition. He, learning her state of mind, left his home and country, took up his residence in England, and became established in the protestant religion. This man was a dangerous speculator in the eyes of his mother, as Mr. Van Dyck was in the apprehension of Dr. Milledoler, and the members of the board of superintendants. In their belief, Mr. Van Dyck had not the right to speculate on such abstruse points, as the eternity of the Sonship and of the procession ; as he ought to have known, that these matters had long since undergone speculations, until they had become as firmly settled as any proposition in Euclid. They believe that by the speculations of St. Athanasius, about fifteen hundred years ago, it became, and is now certain, that Jesus Christ, as God, is of the substance of the father, begotten *before the world* ; and as man, of the substance of his mother, born in time ; and that he is not one with the Father by mixture of substance, but by unity of person : and that all who do not believe this, (though the Bible no where declares any thing as to several of these propositions,) “ shall, without doubt, perish everlastingly.” (See constitution of the Reformed Dutch church, 145.) They also believe, that by the speculations of the authors of our Confession of Faith, and the Synod of Dort, two hundred years ago, it is now settled, that Jesus Christ was *from eternity*, begotten by the father, and that the Holy Spirit from all eternity proceeded from the Father and the Son. But they believe, moreover, that the age of speculation has passed by, as much as the age of miracles has ; that what was very necessary and praiseworthy in the days of our ancestors, is now very heretical and presumptuous : and that all we have to do now, is simply to swallow down speculations made in the proper age of the world. There is, perhaps, little doubt that the offence taken by Professor Milledoler at Mr. Van Dyck, has been because of the trouble the former has met from what he deemed in the latter an inclination to speculation. The Professor is mistaken. The term is misapplied to the student, but would be properly applicable to the Professor himself, had he originated all the notions he

teaches in the school. A fair examination into the meaning of the scriptures ought never to be reproached by the name of speculation; but it is a contrary practice that deserves the odium and the name, namely, the presumptuous attempt to clear up every doubt and difficulty in relation to the mysteries of God's word; the endeavour to reduce to the form of mathematical precision notions concerning the person and mode of existence of the incomprehensible triune God, not explicitly and evidently declared in the Bible. Of this species of speculation, it is to be hoped, that Mr. Van Dyck and every theological student will always beware; but that they will never surrender to any man, or body of men, the right which God has given them, to examine and exercise their judgment upon the meaning of the holy scriptures, yielding themselves to the teaching of the Holy Spirit alone. A young man whose lot it may be, to be born of popish parents, and to have a popish professor of theology, to guide him in the course of his studies, is not thereby discharged from the duty of applying with diligence and prayerfulness, to deduce light from the fountain of light, nor is he brought under the obligation to surrender the exercise of his understanding, in deference to the decrees of councils, or the Pope. The case is not changed in the person of Mr. Van Dyck, by the circumstance of his being sent into the Seminary of the Reformed Dutch Church. The Bible still remains the only infallible standard; and he had no more right to take it for granted that the standards of the Dutch Church were in all points correct, than he would have been to give implicit credence to the Roman confession of faith, in a Roman school of theology.

It was in the exercise of the same unalienable right, of exercising his own judgment, under divine teaching, on the meaning of the scriptures, that Luther, and the early reformers, suffered persecution, and final excommunication, from the church of Rome. To pass over the history of the martyrs, and of persecution for conscience' sake, after the close of scripture history, let us mention in this connexion, a case or two, from the sacred records themselves. The apostles, Peter and John, were Jews, born in the Jewish church. The scribes were

the acknowledged expounders of the scriptures in that church. In the exercise of their legitimate powers, they had adjudged that Jesus was not the Christ, but had been lawfully put to death as a blasphemer. These apostles, however, notwithstanding the authority of the church, preached that Jesus was the Christ, and was risen from the dead. The elders, scribes, and high priests interposed their authority, and forbade them not to speak at all, or preach in the name of Jesus. Did Peter and John admit that the church had any coercing power over their consciences, so as to dictate to them in matters of faith? No! they put it on the right footing, asserting their obligation to be, to hearken to God and not to men. The Saviour had told the disciples, who were all born in the Jewish church, to *beware of men*, for they would deliver them up to the councils, and scourge them in their synagogues. Does he tell his disciples to yield obedience to the teachings of the ecclesiastical authorities, and that in case of refusal they would be *justly* punished by the church as for crimes? But let us consider the case of the Lord and Saviour himself. Was he not also (I speak of him as to his human nature) a member of the Jewish church? Was he not circumcised, according to the Jewish law? Was there any difference between Christ, and another Jew, in respect of the duty of obedience, to the lawful commands of the church? It seems to me, his whole history evinces, that he did not claim any difference to exist. What was the *conduct* of Christ, as it regarded the teachings of the Jewish church? Did he give any countenance to the dogmas of the scribes, as binding on his conscience, or those of others? Did he believe himself bound to coincide with their views of the Messiah? Did he render obedience to the teachings of the scribes, farther than those teachings coincided with the scriptures? And did he not claim the right, to interpret the Word of God for himself? And did he not openly reprove the Scribes and Pharisees, charging them with teaching for doctrines, the commandments of men? And did he not do this, in presence of his disciples, and thereby teach them to claim the same right of conscience for themselves? Nay, does he not warn them, not to call any man master?

Had the Jewish ecclesiastical rulers barely cast off Jesus Christ for non-conformity to their standards, they might have told him as our churches now tell men, that will not adopt every word of their creeds, "We do you no injury—the world is open to you—go to the Gentiles. Every society has the right to adopt its own rules of faith and practice ; and if ours please you not, we just give you the opportunity to retire from our communion ; and if you can suit yourself any where else, it is well ; if not, it is your misfortune or fault, and not ours." This would have been the language of the Jews to the Lord Jesus and his apostles, if they had not possessed the physical power to scourge, imprison, and put them to death. Such would be the language of the Popish Church in Spain, if they had neither the inquisition to coerce men into the faith, or in case of contumacy, power to punish the stubborn man by burning him at an *auto de fè*, and, by the same *sacred* engine of power, deter others from non-conformity.

Now, I ask with earnestness and anxiety, had not the Jews, and have not the Roman Catholics, the same right to force the dogmas of the church upon the consciences of the members of their respective churches, as the Reformed Dutch Church has to do the same with her members ? They went farther in their persecution, because they had the power. But what would the Board of Superintendants have done, if they had possessed the power ? We may form some judgment on this matter by what they have done. But I must not wander from my present business, which is to show what was the duty of Mr. Van Dyck in his circumstances. In the course of my remarks, it has been shown that when he entered the seminary as a theological student, he not only had the right, but it was his most solemn duty, to learn theology from the Bible. The professors had the right, and it was their duty, to direct his course of studies, to teach him their opinions on theology, showing the reasons for their opinions ; but they had not the right to quarrel with him for not understanding the Bible as they did. Nor had the board of superintendants any right to take up the quarrel in behalf of the Professor of didactic theology. I know well, it may look like assuming high ground

for a young man to pretend to know, or aim at knowing, more than his teachers. But my doctrine does not lead to this conclusion. Any man that barely possesses common sense, has the right to refuse his assent to what the wisest man may say on any matter of religious opinion, until *his judgment* is convinced. Nay, it is his indispensable duty. We may not take religious opinions on the credit of any man, or any body of men. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." And certainly a student of theology, expecting to become a teacher of others, ought to become well acquainted with the Bible—the fountain of knowledge—and to exercise his own judgment, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, as to the true meaning of the Scriptures. He may, by yielding implicit assent to what is taught him, get much by rote, but his mind, after all, will not embrace much that is valuable to himself or others. He may acquire a stock of other men's ideas and opinions, while he acquires very few of his own. The disciples of a famous Greek philosopher wanted nothing better than the opinion of their master; and "*ipse dixit*" silenced every scruple, and doubt, and opposition. So the Jewish doctors had gained the complete ascendancy over the minds of their students, so that the utmost ambition of the latter soared no higher than to learn what his master knew. As to his ability or duty to learn any thing beyond, or his questioning the truth of what he was taught, the idea never entered his mind. In allusion to this state of facts it is, that Jesus Christ says, "The disciple is not above his master; but every one that is perfect shall be as his master." This was the received opinion in his day among the Jews, whose teachers craved the titles of Rabbi, Master, or Father, and their disciples had their views of perfection limited to the knowledge of their teacher. It was to elevate the Christian disciple above this grovelling sentiment, that he directs him not to call any man father. And he shows the danger of the sentiment in the parable, Luke vi. 40, which he opens by saying, "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch;" and then adds the verse above quoted: that is to say, If the scribe, who undertakes to teach, should be blind to the meaning of the scriptures, and you rely on his teaching, you will fall with

him into the same ditch. You have a better guide, the scriptures themselves;—able to make you wise unto salvation. The Saviour did not direct the disciple from a single scribe to a council of them, as affording greater probability of arriving at the truth; nor to a succession of them ever since the return from the Babylonish captivity; for that would have thrown him among the traditions of the elders, by which the scribes and Pharisees made void the law of God, and taught for doctrines still, the commandments of men, instead of the commandments of God. It was to repress in the Christian teachers the spirit of the Jewish doctors, that the Saviour tells his disciples, “Be ye not called Rabbi.” “Be ye not called Masters.” The Saviour yet speaks (for the word of God endureth forever;) to every student of theology: *Search the Scriptures*; pray for the spirit of truth to guide you into all truth; receive no man’s interpretations without examination. Many important errors have been introduced under great names, and perpetuated without examination, through successive generations. Allow of no master in your teachings but God. Jesus Christ yet speaks to every teacher of theology: Assume not the title and consequence of a master, as though you had the right to command acquiescence in your opinions. If your pupils see not with your eyes, do not quarrel with them, as though they doubted your capacity, or refused to assent from perverse unteachableness. Cramp not the minds of your students—hear their reasons patiently, and encourage them to exercise their reasoning powers. He yet speaks to public bodies in the responsible station in which our board of superintendants stands. Do not countenance in your professors of theology the ambition of being masters over the consciences of your students. Do not thus enslave the minds of your future ministers of the gospel; unless you are content to entail upon the church an inefficient ministry, and to ensure the perpetuity of whatever errors may creep into it.

SECTION VI.

Mr. Van Dyck's crimes—His unbelief—Christ licensed his disciples to preach, notwithstanding their unbelief of the doctrine of his approaching death or resurrection—God commissioned Moses to deliver Israel and guide them to Canaan, notwithstanding his unbelief of God's promise of assistance.

“The wisdom of men is foolishness with God.”

“But in Religion they at once grew wise,
A creed in print, though never understood,
A theologic system on the shelf,
Was spiritual lore enough, and serv'd their turn ;
But serv'd it ill.”

By some, the crime of Mr. Van Dyck is stated in another form, namely, that he was guilty of unbelief in doctrines which our standards profess to have drawn from the scriptures, and that therefore he was justly punished, by being rejected from the ministry.

Admitting, now, that the Board had what they claim to have had, the right to put the orthodoxy of the student to the test, by requiring his subscription to the points on which he doubted, was it *expedient* for them so to do ? Was it wise for them to insist on his *immediate* compliance, and to refuse him the privilege of applying to classis, because he did not instantly yield ? And when they demanded his continuance in the seminary, did they suppose that he would not see the attempt at coercion ; and if he should, was it not evident that his stay would not only have been useless, but absurd and criminal ? Could not the Board have intrusted him to the care of the classis, hoping that they would perform their duties, and that the mind of the student, by that time, might have become more settled ? Would not such mild, affectionate, and rational

treatment have been better calculated to preserve the good of the student, and the interests of the School and of the Church ? Was there a necessity of having the matter determined by this body, unknown to the constitution, stepping into, if not usurping, the powers vested in the classis ? Was there a necessity to attempt to hold the student to yield his doubts or unbelief now ; now, before he leaves the Theological School ? Did our Lord do so with his disciples ? Did not he grant licenses to preach the gospel ? He did ; and what he did is full of interest and instruction. He took frequent occasion to inform his disciples of his approaching death ; but they were much inclined to disbelieve him. Mark viii. 31. “ And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again—and he spoke that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.” This was after the disciples had seen many of his miracles, and heard much of his preaching. And after the transfiguration of our blessed Saviour on the Mount, recorded in the ninth chapter of Mark, in the 31st verse, he taught his disciples, and said unto them : “ The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him ; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. But they understood not this saying, and were afraid to ask him.” And again, Mark x. 32. “ And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen to him, saying, behold, we go to Jerusalem, and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles ; and they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him, and the third day he shall rise again.” So far were the disciples from believing in the approaching death of their Lord, that two of them applied for an office in the temporal kingdom which they expected he was about to erect. Some of my readers may be surprised to hear that all this transpired after the disciples had been licensed to preach the gospel, the account of which is recorded in the sixth chapter of Mark. What did the Saviour do on these *manifestations* of

their unbelief? Did he revoke their license, on the ground that now was evident they did not believe what they had been taught, and which had been repeated so many times? No; he rebukes them indeed for their unbelief, but did not condemn them as heretics, and seal up their lips from preaching the gospel. There was yet another doctrine on which the disciples of our Lord were very incredulous, namely, his resurrection. On descending the mount, after his transfiguration, he charged his disciples that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man was risen from the dead. And they kept that saying among themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean. Mark ix. 9, 10. And in the passage above quoted, to show the unbelief of the disciples as to his approaching death, he tells them also of his resurrection, but they believed not. And after the crucifixion and death of the Saviour, they still remained incredulous. Matt. xxviii. 16. "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped, but some doubted. Mark is more particular. After mentioning the appearance of Christ to Mary Magdalene, after his resurrection, he says, chap. xvi. "And she told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. After this, he appeared in another form unto two of them as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue, neither believed they them. Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen." Now one would think they would have been given up as wholly unteachable—especially would one think so who had learned no more of the qualifications of ministers of the gospel than what is to be learned from the proceedings of our Board of Superintendants. But Christ thought differently, as the history shows;—for Mark adds immediately in the very next verse. "And he said unto them, go ye into all the world; preach the gospel to every creature.

And Matthew relates to the like effect. So that on the proof of their unbelief of the doctrine of the resurrection, instead of declaring them unfit to preach the gospel, which before they were to preach to the Jews only, he instantly renews their commission, and extends it so as to license them to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Let me not be told, that these are instances of the unbelief of facts, distinguished from unbelief of doctrines. It is not so. They positively disbelieved the doctrines of the prophets and of Christ himself, until they could no longer disbelieve because of the evidence of their senses. They did not believe the doctrine in relation to his death, until they saw him dead ; nor did they believe the doctrine of his resurrection, until they actually saw him after he had risen from the dead. And if the Board of Superintendants could have adduced to Mr. Van Dyck the same degree of evidence from the scriptures, as to the doctrine of the eternal generation, and the eternal procession, and that Christ died in no sense for the non-elect, as the disciples had from their scriptures of the death and resurrection of Christ, independent of their ocular demonstration of the facts, they would have had no occasion to use any measures to coerce him into the belief of their tenets. It is presumed that it will be conceded, that the doctrines which the disciples disbelieved, were quite as important as those on which Mr. Van Dyck entertained doubts and difficulties.

But there is more light to be derived from the scriptures on this subject.

When God commissioned Moses to be his instrument in delivering the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage, he accompanied the commission by a manifestation of his power, in the miracle of the bush on fire, and not consumed ; and by a full declaration of his omnipotence, and with the positive assurance, of the success of his mission. *Exod. chap. iii.* Moses raised doubts, and said the Israelites would not believe him, when he should tell them, that he was sent of God. The Almighty did not even reprove him for his unbelief, but told him to cast the rod, he held in his hand, on the ground. He did so, and it became a serpent ; which, on being seized by

him, at God's command, became again a rod. Moses was then ordered to put his hand in his bosom, and on pulling it out, his hand was leprous as snow; and having put it in his bosom again, at the like command, it was turned again as his other flesh. The Lord assured him that when he came to the children of Israel, he should have power to perform the same miracles, and they would believe in his mission. But the doubts of Moses were not removed; he objected to the propriety of his employment, that he was slow of speech, and that the business required a man of eloquence. The Lord assured him that he would bestow eloquence upon him when he needed it, and to assist the faith of Moses, in his power to do it, reminded him that he had made man's mouth. "And now, therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say." And yet Moses did not believe, but requested the Lord to send some other messenger. Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and he gave him Aaron, his brother, to go with him. The brother of Moses did not interpose so many difficulties, nor entertain the doubts which Moses did. Read the history.—"And the Lord said "unto Aaron, go into the wilderness to meet Moses, and he "went; and Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who "had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded "him. And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all "the elders of the children of Israel; and Aaron spake all the "words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the "signs in the sight of the people; and the people believed." With Aaron there was no hesitation, no doubt. Moses did not believe any faster than his reason was convinced by facts; and even against facts, held out till God's wrath was kindled. His doubts seem to have been in part removed by the boldness of Aaron, but they revived again in their strength, when he found that the children of Israel fared harder through his interference; and he said, *Exod. v. 22*, "Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all." The Lord, according to the

greatness of his forbearance and long suffering, immediately declares himself by the name of Jehovah, reassures Moses that he would assuredly deliver the children of Israel according to his promise, and *renews his commission*. *Exod. ch. vi.* Moses found the people of Israel reluctant to attend to his message ; and when God, verse 11, ordered him to go to Pharaoh, and command him to let his people go, Moses yet again objected from unbelief, saying, "Behold, the children of Israel have "not hearkened unto me, how then shall Pharaoh hear me, "who am of uncircumcised lips?" The Lord did not send fire down from heaven, to consume his unbelieving servant, nor did he declare him wholly unfit for the mission, nor did he even rebuke him ; nay, he immediately **RENEWED HIS COMMISSION.**

Our Board of Superintendants would have revoked the commission of Moses, and conferred it on Aaron, as altogether the most promising instrument to accomplish the desired object. But the wisdom of man is foolishness with God. He persisted in sending Moses as the principal, and Aaron was deputed to be merely his assistant. And let us now consult the history, and see whose faith, of the two, was the most constant ; whose conduct the most exemplary, and whose services the most valuable. Moses became established, rooted, and grounded in the faith ; and did not prove to be of the number of those, who are ever learning, and never attaining to the knowledge of the truth. He became "very meek, above all the men on the "face of the earth ;" and not that unteachable, proud, self-sufficient man, which a superficial observer of human nature would have predicted, from his refusal to assent to a proposition before he was convinced of its truth. He became eminent for his wisdom, and for the rectitude of his conduct ; a man with whom God talked face to face, whose ways pleased God, and who accomplished the object of his mission. But what proved to be the character of Aaron ? When Moses tarried on Mount Sinai, receiving the law from the mouth of God, the people requested Aaron, and that just after his appointment to the priesthood, to make them gods to go before them. He complied with this request, as readily as he did at first with the

command of God, to go with Moses on his mission ; and without hesitation, ordered the people to bring him their golden ear-rings, and he made of the gold a molten calf. And Aaron built an altar before it, and proclaimed a feast in honour of the idol. And when Moses reproved him for his conduct, he added to his guilt by prevarication. *Exod. xxxii.* And it was through the prayer of Moses, that he was saved from destruction. *Numb. ix. 20.* His faith in God had not attained so firm a hold on his mind as had that of Moses. He seems to have easily complied with the humour of his sister, Miriam, in speaking reproachfully of Moses, whom God vindicated in their presence, and testifies that he was faithful in all God's house, contrasting his conduct with that of Aaron and Miriam. *Numb. xii.* While the *faith* of Moses is commemorated at large in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, the name of Aaron was not deemed worthy, by the inspired apostle, of a place among the honoured believers, whose faith is there recorded.

I am well aware, that it will be attempted to avoid the force of the scriptural arguments above adduced from the dealings of God with Moses, and the dealings of Christ with his disciples. It will be contended, that those instances are inapplicable to the present times, because the truths of God are now better defined than they were in the times of Moses and of Christ. It is readily admitted, that, possessing the entire scriptures, we have a more full revelation of the *truth* than those who had only the Old Testament, or those who depended on immediate revelation or tradition. In the progress of filling up the sacred records, some truths have been more plainly revealed, and God forbid that it should be asserted that any one truth has been obscured by the multiplication of the sacred writers. But this I will say, that the field of theological discussion has thereby become much enlarged. It results from the imperfection of the human understanding, taken in connexion with his depravity and circumstances, that the process of reasoning is not the same in minds of the best order ; and that even when they reason from the very same premises, they will oftentimes draw opposite conclusions.

Free and candid discussion will frequently unite the opinions of such as differed widely ; and not unfrequently, the sentiments of the wisest and best of men will remain at variance, notwithstanding the best chosen means of reconciling them. It might have pleased God so to have revealed his will, and so to have framed the human mind, and so to have disposed of the conditions and circumstances of mankind, as to have ensured a perfect unanimity in regard to the truths of the Bible. But it has *not pleased him so to do*. He has so constituted and placed us, as to make it our duty to cultivate our faculties in the investigation of the truths of his word ; that we should not content ourselves with a single and careless perusal of the Bible—but that we make a business of searching the Scriptures with diligence, with perseverance, and in the exercise of all our reasoning powers ; not indeed indulging in vain speculation, and philosophy falsely so called, but with an honest desire to know the truth, and to live in the practice of it. And for man to attempt a reversal of this order in God's œconomy, was impious ; it was impious for the ancient councils—it was impious for the church of Rome, so to constitute her rules of government and discipline, as to ensure an actual or seeming unanimity in religious opinions. You seldom hear of any differences of sentiment among the Roman Catholic clergy. They see, to all outward appearance, eye to eye ;—and they have actually succeeded in coercing a real agreement of religious opinions among the body of her clergy, and among the body of her laity. But it has been done at the expense of both religious freedom and of truth.

The argument yet is, that theological truth is now so well defined as to admit of being stated with precision, in the form of creeds, confessions, or articles of faith ; and that, when so stated, there ought not to be any disbelief, or even doubt, as to any proposition contained in such confession, creeds, or articles ; and that, therefore, the forbearance of God with the doubts of Moses, and the long suffering of Christ with the unbelief of his disciples, is now altogether irrelevant. If the whole of the above proposition be correct, how happens it, that there are so many different creeds in the world—so many

different creeds in protestant churches? Why could not all the protestant churches have joined in one creed, instead of having them so numerous? It is no answer to say, the creeds of Protestant churches differ but little. The least deviation in meaning, of one from another, destroys your principle as effectually as though the differences were greater. And admitting your position, in all its breadth, what does it prove but this: That the Bible itself is so plain, as not to admit of any difficulties, doubts, or uncertainties in its interpretation. And if so, where is the need of creeds? It is the liability of christians to differ in regard to the truths of the Bible, which can at all render it necessary to make them plainer, by dressing them in human language. If then, this liability to differ does exist, does it not arise from the nature of the revelation and the construction of the human mind, when taken in connexion with his sinfulness and circumstances? And if men have succeeded in drawing up a system of theological propositions, admitting of no differences of opinion or doubts, it is clear to my mind, that they either make a new Bible, or else thwart the design of God, in so framing the revelation of his will, as that, whilst man is commanded to search the scriptures, he should by the necessity of a frequent and constant perusal in order to comprehend them, expose himself, so to speak, to the fulness of its moral influence.

SECTION VII.

Crimes, or mistakes of the Board ; rejecting the Bible as the standard of ministerial qualifications, and adopting human standards in its stead, and attempting to enforce them on his conscience.—Scriptural qualifications stated.—Applied to the case in hand.—Pretence that they did decide the case on scripture ground, because the standards accord with the Bible, refuted.

“ Each had his conscience, each his reason, will,
Understanding, for himself to search,
To choose, reject, believe, consider, act :
And God proclaimed from heaven, and by an oath
Confirmed, that each should answer for himself.”

THE rejection of Mr. Van Dyck from the ministry was not probably a pleasant result to every member of the Board. Some doubtless took pleasure in it, because, in their party zeal, they really believed they were casting a wolf out of the fold. Others were entangled in a net of forms, and knew not how to shove aside the net, and had not courage to break through it. It does not appear that any one of their number ever thought of putting the matter upon scriptural grounds, or of examining the qualifications of the student on the authority of the Bible. Such as were not overheated with zeal for orthodoxy in the abstract, could not but have perceived at once the abstruseness of the doctrines on which he *doubted*, and that even a *denial* of those doctrines could in no degree have interfered with his usefulness. But it seems not to have occurred to them that, professing to sit in judgment in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, on the qualifications of a preacher of the gospel, there was higher authority than that of the Reformed Dutch Church, or the Synod of Dort, binding upon their consciences ; and that a protestant church had no more right to prescribe directories of faith distinct from the scriptures, than the church of Rome had to ordain as a

rule of faith, the doctrine of transubstantiation, and the infallibility of the Pope. The Board ought to have considered, that they were under the control of the word of God, and that neither they nor the student had the right to receive and embrace doctrines unsupported by the sacred oracles, merely because they are established by the power of this world. Those who assume the awful responsibility of sitting in judgment on the admission and rejection of ministers of the gospel, ought to be well acquainted with the *scriptural* qualifications of ministers: and not the rules of the wisest church on earth; not any consideration whatever, can excuse them for admitting to the office of the holy ministry, men whom they have reason to believe would have been refused by the Lord Jesus Christ or his apostles, were the concerns of the church on earth now administered by these in person; or for rejecting such as they would have admitted. Did the members of the Board act on the recognition of this principle, or did they look no further than to the standards of the church? If that were correct in them, why is it not correct for the Roman Catholic Church to deny admission to such as deny the doctrine of transubstantiation? Then it is easy to prove that two contrary propositions are equally true.—That in the church of Christ, which the Lord Jesus Christ declared to be one, it is correct in one Christian community to practise on one principle, and in another, to practise on a principle diametrically opposite. Whatever is right is certainly sanctioned by the Head of the church. Then it is proved, for aught I see, that the Head of the church declares two opposite things to be right. Can this be so? Do you ask me, what other rule of action is there for man in his public or private capacity, than his belief of what is right and wrong? I answer there is no other, for he may not act against his conviction. Yet the standard of right and wrong is uniform and inflexible, and every man is bound to conform to it, at his peril. God has given him the means of knowing it, and he must use those means to form a correct opinion. The consistory of a church or a classis, a particular or a general Synod, can no more protect themselves under the rules and standards of the church, for what the

scriptures do not warrant, than a pedagogue can allege the rules of his school to justify the hanging of his pupils. The question then, whether the Board did right or wrong, is not to be decided on the construction of the rules of the church only, but on the language and spirit of the Holy Scriptures. After you have established the correctness of the standards, that is, their agreement with the Bible, then you may justify your conduct under the standards, by virtue of their agreement with the word of God. But as this word is always at hand, ready not only to be compared with the standards, but to be applied at once to the case in hand, I really see no reason why any reference should be had to the standards at all. We might with the same propriety on the question of the identity of a man, bring into court his likeness, when the man himself might be produced; or on a question of the construction of a deed or will, insist on arguing the case upon an abstract, made, if you please, by a competent hand, when the original paper was in court. Thus far our argument is clear and incontrovertible, and to the great standard, the Bible, we must go, unless that is so deficient in the light it affords on the subject of ministerial qualifications, as to compel us to frame human rules to reach the necessities of the case. It would appear strange indeed, that on a question of such magnitude, we could not find truths in the holy scriptures, sufficient to guide us in the exercise of a sound judgment. To make a competent minister of the gospel, it is necessary that his character should be adapted to that office; that he should have that positive good character that will commend him to the love and confidence of his people, and that he should be exempt from those sins, faults, and blemishes, which, notwithstanding a character generally good, would mar his usefulness; that he should have a competent knowledge of what things he ought to teach, and an acquaintance with the subjects he is required to teach; together with a degree of aptness to communicate information, and enforce his instructions on the conscience. On all these matters the scriptures seem to me to possess a fulness quite sufficient for every purpose of forming a correct judgment of the qualifications of a preacher.

1. As to his character, in a positive sense, it is required that he should be vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, patient in ruling well his own house, having his children in subjection, having a good report of them that are without. 1 Tim. iii. 2—7. That he should be an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. 1 Tim. iv. 12. A lover of good men, just, holy, temperate. Titus i. 8. See also 1 Cor. iv. 2, 3. 2 Cor. iv. 10. As to his character negatively, he must be blameless, the husband of one wife, not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre, not a brawler, nor covetous, not a novice. 1 Tim. iii. 1—7. Not accused of riot, or unruly, not *self-willed*, not *soon angry*. Titus i. 6, 7.

2. As to his conduct. He must withdraw himself from perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth. 1 Tim. vii. 5. He must flee covetousness, follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness; fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life. 1 Tim. vi. 11, 12. He must hold fast the form of sound words, (referring to what Paul had taught Timothy.) 2 Tim. i. 13. Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 2 Tim. ii. 3. Study to show himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. ver. 15. Flee youthful lusts, follow after righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. ver. 22. He must be *gentle unto all men*, ver. 24. Continue in the things he has learned, namely, the Holy Scriptures. 2 Tim. iii. 14, 15. Watch in all things. 2 Tim. iv. 5. Titus i. 9. In all things showing himself a pattern of good works, in doctrine showing *uncorruptness*, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned. Titus ii. 7, 8. After the first and second admonition to reject an heretic; knowing that he that is such is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself. Titus iii. 10, 11.

3. As to what things he must preach, teach, and encourage. He must preach Christ crucified. 1 Cor. i. 23. ii. 2. Christ reconciling the world to himself. 2 Cor. v. 19. As ambassadors for Christ, entreating sinners to be reconciled. 2 Cor. v. 20.

Knowing the terrors of the Lord, to persuade men. 2 Cor. v. 11. The duty of contributing to benevolent objects. 2 Cor. viii. and ix. That love is preferable to knowledge, faith, or hope. 1 Cor. xiii. 8. 13. That prayers and thanksgivings be made for all men. 1 Tim. ii. 1. To put the brethren in remembrance of what he had learned. 1 Tim. iv. 5. To teach servants their duties. 1 Tim. vi. 1, &c. The behaviour and appearance of women. 1 Tim. ii. 9, &c. Behaviour to elders and widows. 1 Tim. v. Duties to magistrates. Titus iii. 1, &c. The duties of the rich. 1 Tim. vi. 17, &c. The duties of the aged men and widows; of the young men. Titus ii. 6. To rebuke sinners. 1 Tim. v. 20. To testify against all ungodliness. 2 Tim. iii. Titus ii. To teach contentment and godliness. 1 Tim. vi. 6. To teach men to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, and to be gentle and meek. Titus iii. 1, 2.

4. He must be also *apt* to teach. 1 Tim. iii. 2. Not to neglect the gift that is in him—to meditate on these things—to take heed unto himself and his doctrine, and continue in them. 1 Tim. v. 13—16. To be instant in season and out of season, to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. To use not carnal, but spiritual weapons. 2 Cor. x. 3, 4. Not with enticing words of man's wisdom, that the faith of the hearers may stand not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. To feel their sufficiency to be of God. 2 Cor. iii. 5. To have the love of Christ constraining them. 2 Cor. v. 14. Not to know any man after the flesh. 2 Cor. v. 16. What things are to be avoided in their ministry. Dishonesty. 2 Cor. iv. 2. Not to give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith. 1 Tim. i. 4. To avoid profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science, falsely so called. 1 Tim. vi. 20. The same caution is repeated against profane and vain babblings, for that they would increase unto more ungodliness. 2 Tim. ii. 16. Not to strive about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. 2 Tim. ii. 14. Foolish and unlearned questions to avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. 2 Tim. ii. 23.

That the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men ; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves. 2 Tim. ii. 24. Not to give heed to Jewish fables, and *commandments of men that turn from the truth*. Titus i. 14. Not to exercise dominion over the faith of others. 2 Cor. i. 24.

Here surely is a goodly list of the qualifications requisite for the ministry of the gospel. Had the Board taken pains to place before them, read and consider these qualifications, they might have been brought to such a sense of their own deficiencies, as either to make them forget the abstruse points on which Mr. Van Dyck doubted, or to show them the propriety of forbearing with their young brother, for not being able to find these scholastic doctrines in the Bible. They might have understood that the preachers of the gospel, to meddle with matters so obscurely and doubtfully revealed, (if revealed at all,) may come within the prohibition of the Apostle, who commands not to strive about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. By fixing their eyes exclusively on the standards, and perhaps not recollecting their own practical breeches of some of them, and not being aware that their faith in the correctness of the standards was more a business of credit, than matter of conviction, they found it not so difficult to reject a young man, whom the Apostles and the Saviour himself would have admitted, as they would have done, had they duly weighed the scriptural qualifications of a minister of the gospel, and permitted their consciences to put to them the question, Are *we* perfect, and therefore authorized to cast the first stone at the young brother ; or, as they would have done, had they reflected that they ought to act, not as the instruments of vindicating the opinions of a sect or party, but for the good of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and as under his inspection, and responsible to him for their acts.

We have heretofore proved, that the Lord Jesus did not require of his disciples, as the condition of their exercise of the ministry, that they should believe every truth he taught them ; for they believed not what he told them concerning his death and resurrection ; but he, notwithstanding, continued

them in the ministry, and even renewed their commission, while the Board reject Mr. Van Dyck from the ministry, not for denying any thing that Christ or the sacred writers have plainly declared—but for doubting what has been declared by philosophizing, speculating men, indulging in scholastic reasoning, and filling up chasms in their systems of theology, which God had left, perhaps on purpose to humble the pride of man, and repress his presumption and vain curiosity to pry into things too deep for him.

I must be excused for pressing this subject on the Board, as a matter of great moment in the future exercise of their offices; for I fear they will, like other transgressors, summon all their energies to resist the force of truth. The futility of flying for refuge to the rules of the church, and the necessity, for coming to a safe conclusion, of going at once to the original standard, has been plainly proved. Let me now ask you, what authority you had from the scriptures, to lay so great a stress on abstract matters of faith,—matters of faith that cannot influence the practice of preacher or hearer? Did not the inspired writers understand this subject? How little, comparatively, do they say of mere matters of belief? and how much of practice? Look at the list of qualifications again. Examine your Bibles to ascertain whether they have been faithfully digested—or rather, throw away the digest, and *search* the scriptures themselves, and learn thence the true qualifications of a gospel minister; and then declare wherein you found Mr. Van Dyck deficient. On what grounds, do you think, St. Paul, or the Lord Jesus Christ, would have rejected him? If you cannot answer these points to your satisfaction, do you think the Head of the Church will sanction your rejection of him? Or, is it a sin laying at your door, until acknowledged and repented of? You say of Mr. Van Dyck, that one thing he lacked, namely, a belief of the two points of doctrine so often mentioned. But where do you find this to be one of the qualifications of a gospel minister, that he should believe these doctrines? We have seen, or may see, by searching the scriptures, what doctrines ought to be preached and taught. Are these named among them?

The direction to Ezekiel, to declare the whole counsel of God, had no reference to abstruse doctrines, but only to the exact declaration of the message God sent by him to Israel. Be this as it may, where do you find your authority for making the belief of abstract points of doctrine an indispensable prerequisite? The *important* things to be taught are certainly to be found in the New Testament. It will not help your conduct to allege the difficulty of distinguishing between essential and unessential points of faith,—for then you must take the ground, that Christ or the apostles ought to have rejected from the ministry, all who did not believe every thing taught in the scriptures of the Old Testament. We have seen that the disciples of our Lord did not believe what the Prophets taught concerning the death and resurrection of the Messiah. He judged of the importance of their believing these doctrines, knowing, at the same time, their other qualifications. So it was for the Board to judge of the importance of the points of faith, on which Mr. Van Dyck hesitated; to consider his time of life; his other qualifications; the difference between disbelieving and doubting; and then solemnly to say whether, under all these circumstances, they could plead a warrant from the scriptures for rejecting him, and whether they could believe that the Saviour himself would have done it. If you say you have no discretion in case of disbelief or doubt of any of the doctrines which you believe to be taught in the Bible, but that in such case you are bound to reject; or, in other words, that you have no dispensing power as to any point of doctrine, then let me ask you, whether you have any dispensing power as to any other qualification? If so, where do you derive a power to dispense with any qualification as to character, conduct, temper, or any thing else distinct from mere matters of belief? Should an applicant for the ministry offer himself to you, whom you had reason to believe was not exactly temperate as to the quantity or quality of his food; or not exactly hospitable, rather soon angry, somewhat inclined to covet, or too much self-willed, rather impatient, not remarkable for meekness, not gentle unto all men, disposed to be unwatchful, or not possessing that gravity which would be desirable in a minister, or,

if you please, somewhat given to wine—being deficient in *any one* of these particulars, but possessing every other qualification, would you reject him? Then you require a *perfect* man. Well, then, if you can dispense with perfection in character or conduct, cannot you dispense with perfection in faith? Where do you find this distinction in the Bible? Do you find so much more stress laid in the Bible on matters of faith, than on matters of christian practice? If so, in what part of the Bible? Do you not, in fact, find much more stress laid in the scriptures, on matters of practice than on matters of faith? St. Paul was surely a theologian, yet you find him insist much more on practical qualifications than on those of speculative belief. Nay, he insists almost exclusively on the former. So the Lord Jesus Christ proceeded on the same principles. Let me make an explanation in this place: I do not contend that Christ would now, if on earth, license a man to preach, who disbelieved his atonement, or resurrection, or ascension. The evidence of the truth of these doctrines is so incontrovertible now, as that the denial or doubt of them would prove a man unconverted, and as not having received the message he is required to deliver, and unfit for a preacher of the gospel. But the great Head of the church, would, if now on earth, act on the same principles in licensing preachers, as he did when he commissioned his disciples. He would no more require faith in *every* truth, than he did then. Had a man then disputed his Messiahship, he would not have sent him forth to preach. So now a denial or doubt of the *substance of the gospel*, which a minister is required to preach, is a disqualification. Did Mr. Van Dyck believe the substance of the gospel, notwithstanding his doubts as to eternal generation and eternal procession? None but a bigoted partizan will question it. How, then, do you justify your rejection of him from the ministry? You have not acted on the principles of Christ, nor of his apostles, nor decided the case on the ground of the qualifications required in the Bible. Then you have acted independently of the authority of God: and now take refuge to the institutions of men—to your doctrine of voluntary associations—to the rules of the church—to the opinions of wise

men, and that for a succession of ages. What but this was the justification on which the scribes, pharisees, and priests rested their conduct in the time of the Saviour? In their condemnation of the Saviour, they disregarded the scriptures of the Old Testament, confiding in the received interpretations of the Jewish Church; and Christ charged them with making void the law of God by their traditions, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men; while under the influence of that *essential error*, they crucified and slew him.

It is by disregarding the scriptures that errors creep into any church. But no church, so departing from the true standard, can keep the consciences of its members at ease without something which they are led to believe is of equal correctness with the Bible. So the Jews got their traditions. So the Papists got their doctrine of the infallibility of the church and pope; and so we, in our church, get what we call "*our most excellent standards*," and we keep repeating, in almost every report or document, that is presented to, or passes through, the hands of Classis, particular Synod, general Synod, and Magazine, expressions calculated to impress on the minds of laymen and clergy the full belief, that the scriptures and our standards are convertible terms. This process of inculcation, continued for a length of time, tends to the keeping of the conscience as quiet in the disobeying, as in the obeying of God's word. The inventions of men, being *taken for granted* to accord with the word, are finally adopted as the rule of action, and the conscience rests quietly under it. The conscience of the papist feels as quiet, while he worships the Virgin Mary, as it would, had the first or second commandment never been promulgated. This is the legitimate consequence of setting too high a value on human standards. You, in the same proportion derogate from, nay, you reject, the word of God as the only standard of faith and practice.

I know the members of the Board, to justify themselves for adjudging the case of Mr. Van Dyck on the ground of the standards, will allege that they have in fact decided it on Scripture principles, in as much as the standards perfectly accord with the scriptures. This is the very point in dispute. They

say it is proved. Let us hear their arguments, and answer them.

In the first place, it is urged that the creed of the church has been the same for two hundred years past, and it is presumptuous now to call its truth in question. But the creed of the Roman Catholic Church has been the same it now is, for perhaps one thousand years. If the antiquity of our creed proves it true, the much greater antiquity of the Roman creed would establish that, if possible, to be much *above* the standard of truth.

Another argument is, that councils of very learned ministers, of different countries, have settled our articles of faith, and that the same articles have, from time to time, received the sanction of other councils, synods, and assemblies, not only in Holland but in this country. This argument also proves more for the Roman Catholic church than ours. They have had their councils from a period of greater antiquity. The Synod of Dort can bear no comparison with the council of Trent, as to the number of the members, or the extent of country from which they were collected. The council of Trent was composed of men of at least equal learning with those of the Synod of Dort, and continued their session much longer, namely, for nearly twenty years.

The third argument is drawn from the very superior wisdom of our ancestors; this is indeed the *great argument* always answering the purpose when all others fail.—It is seriously maintained, that the wisdom of the men composing the Synod of Dort was so very great, as to afford ample proof of the correctness of the articles they originated or revised. If I understand what is talked on this subject among us, there is claimed, for the men composing that synod, a species of inspiration little inferior in measure, or kind, to that which was vouchsafed to the writers of the Holy Scriptures,—a very dangerous sentiment, never, it is hoped, to be repeated again. From the declarations of some of our ministers, an uninformed layman would be led to suppose that the Synod of Dort was composed of a race of giants in theology, while the present generation of divines are, in the comparison, mere

dwarfs. These high claims to wisdom ought to be examined, so as to test them. Were these men so extremely wise, it is surely strange that they did not comprehend what the Saviour meant, when He commanded to preach the gospel to every creature; and that, for lack of understanding, they should leave the sublime and god-like work of foreign missions to be conceived or set in operation by the dwarfish theologians of the present day; and it is equally strange, that their wisdom did not lead them to the establishment of Infant schools, Sabbath schools, and Bible classes; the melioration of prisons, and the blessed charity of instructing the deaf and dumb, with the residue of the train of benevolent institutions of modern days; that they should leave it to their remote posterity to discern the spirit of anti-christ in religious establishments; and in the enforcement of religious opinions on the consciences of men, by the arm of civil authority. It does not argue much in favour of the wisdom of the men of Dort, that so great and useful a man as Barneveldt should be executed; and so great and good a man as Grotius should be doomed to perpetual imprisonment, through means of their measures: nor is it evidence of their scriptural knowledge, to find them in their acts, not only avow their own intolerance, but to supplicate the merciful God to move the hearts of the civil rulers to aid them in carrying their intolerant principles into practice.—It is now conceded to have been unwise in the Synod of Dort to establish the observance, besides Sundays, of Christmas, Pauss, and Pinxter, with another day superadded to each, and to urge the attempt to prevail with the civil authority to establish the observance also of the day of the circumcision and of the ascension.

There is another ordinance of that memorable Synod, affording the most melancholy proof of their lack of wisdom, namely,—“That no person professing the Christian religion, shall undertake to publish, or cause to be published, any book or writing on a religious subject, composed or translated by himself or another, without the previous inspection and approbation of the ministers of his classis, or of the particular Synod, or of the professors of theology, with the consent of the classis.” This regulation cuts up, root and branch, all religious magazines and newspapers, *unless the*

same should be conducted by a heathen man or a publican, for a professor of religion is prohibited. The classis or Synod could hardly be convened every month, to hear and pass upon a monthly magazine, as the debates on a single article might consume the space of a month. A weekly or daily newspaper would be still more out of the question. Had it not been the good fortune of the Dutch church in this country to receive into its communion a man from Scotland, who held the wisdom of the Synod of Dort in contempt, we never would have been blessed with that most *extraordinary* work, "THE MAGAZINE OF THE REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH."

But admitting that these men were as wise as they are claimed to have been, (excepting the claim to inspiration, or a quasi inspiration, which can never be admitted,) does this give them the right to enact laws, to bind the consciences of their posterity down to the day of judgment, and to say to them, "We have explored the depths of the book of God, and have brought them up to your view; henceforth all further attempts at discovering the mind of God from his word, is presumption in those who shall undertake it?" Does their wisdom authorize them to limit the human mind in its discoveries of divine truth, and say to it, "Thus far shalt thou go; and here shall thy efforts be stayed, and thy range limited?" Who gave them the right thus to cramp and enchain the rational soul bestowed upon man by his Creator? that they should beseech God not to suffer the civil rulers to tolerate any other religion than that declared by them? How wise soever they may have been in the learning of the schools, they betray in this a narrow mindedness, most strange, unscriptural, and contemptible. And who could have thought, that for the space of two centuries, these pretensions, high sounding as they are, could have held enchained, in mental thralldom, not only the inhabitants of our mother country, but that their slavish and depressing sentiments should have been thus long perpetuated in this land of freedom and intelligence.

I really cannot see but that the same argument, if believed and acted upon, must effectually check and prevent all improvement in every science and in every art. Has not every

age of the world, from the time of Noah to the present day, had an ancestry, of whose remembrance the present actors on the stage of life were proud, on account of their valour, wisdom, or other properties? Had they attempted to outdo their progenitors in any acquirement or branch of knowledge, would they not have been guilty of the same disrespect and presumption, as we would be to assume the right of going beyond the men of the seventeenth century, in the knowledge of theological truth? Let us see how this principle would have operated, if it had been acquiesced in as tamely as our church has acquiesced in the claims of the Synod of Dort. In the science of law and government, mankind never could have progressed beyond the first rude regulations that marked the commencement of society; and the feudal system, under which Europe groaned so long, must have for ever remained the galling yoke of mankind, because it had been established by a wise ancestry. The test act in England could never have been repealed; and ecclesiastical establishments must of necessity be perpetuated. There never could have been a form of government like ours; but republics, aristocracies, limited monarchies, or despotisms—the Spanish, Turkish, and Chinese governments must remain the same while the world endures. The inquisition may never be abolished. The science of medicine could never have admitted of improvement since the days of Esculapius; nor the science of metaphysics since the days of Aristotle, because these were very wise men in their day. While, then, every science is in a state of progressive improvement, and every art of life is, so to speak, emulating one the other in their race towards perfection, must the mind of man remain stationary in the most noble of all the sciences? There is nothing in the nature of the subject to forbid the hope of advancement in the science of theology. I may but hint at what was done by Wickliffe, of England, before the reformation, and by our own Edwards afterwards, each in his time, and both pioneers in the work of reformation and improvement. It is only needful for the divines of the present age of the world, to throw off the shackles of prejudice, and unprofitable submission to the wisdom of our ancestors, and exert their own faculties, to effect,

perhaps, a greater advancement in the science of theology than has yet been effected in any other science.

Having shown that three of the arguments, adduced to prove the correctness of the standards, namely, their antiquity, the multitudes of councils and synods which have decreed them, and the wisdom of our ancestors, are unsound, there is only one remaining, which needs to be answered. It is seldom used, although it is the only one that ever ought to be advanced, namely, that those who now advocate their correctness, have carefully examined all the articles, and find that they fully agree with the word of God. Let me then discuss this matter with the consciences of the Board, to ascertain whether they have made this examination, and made it in the frame of mind requisite to the understanding and reception of the truth—with the impartial exercise of their faculties. To determine this, it is necessary to inquire, at what time you made the examination. If it was before you entered on the study of divinity, with a view to the ministry, perhaps your judgment was not then sufficiently matured, considering the prejudices of education, and partiality for your church, to decide on the niceties of theological science. If it was subsequent to your admission into the Seminary, then you were bound to study the scriptures “in the light of our own standards,” at the peril of being rejected, and persecuted, as Mr. Van Dyck has been. Did you make the examination after your licensure to preach? then you did it at the hazard of being refused ordination, and of the revocation of your license. Or was it after your ordination to the ministry, that you seriously undertook to make this examination? Had you leisure then, among your varied and laborious employments as a minister, to prosecute a deliberate inquiry into all the numerous, difficult, disputed points of doctrine, contained in the voluminous standards of our Church? If you had, could you do it impartially? No. Before you could be ordained, you was compelled to subscribe your name to a formula, wherein you solemnly bound yourself, on pain of deposition, to teach and defend every doctrine contained in the standards, as long as you should continue in the ministry. (See Constitution, p. 206.) And then your examination must have been at the peril of being disgracefully

deposed from your office, and following some secular employment for a maintenance, or spending your days with your wife and children in an almshouse; not very favourable circumstances, truly, for impartially seeking and embracing the truth. All your prejudices and circumstances, from the commencement, tended to lead your mind to an acquiescence in the articles of the Church, whether true or untrue. If you could coincide, all would be peace and comfort; and if you could not, you had every reason to apprehend disquiet, persecution, and pinching want.

As this is an important part of the argument, let me pursue the inquiry a little farther. Whenever your examination was made, let me ask, are you satisfied that the doctrine of Christ's descent into hell, as taught in the apostles' creed, and recognised in the Heidelberg Catechism, as an article of our undoubted christian faith, does fully agree with the Word of God? If so, how comes it that one of your number has publicly denied this doctrine, in the Magazine of the Reformed Dutch Church? See 3d volume, No. 1. page 12. And how comes it, that this member of the Board has never been even called to account for publishing his heretical notions to the whole of our community? 2d. Do you believe the definition of saving faith, given in the answer to the 21st question of the Heidelberg Catechism; and that an *assured confidence*, of the forgiveness of one's sins, is of the essence of it, according to the scriptures? 3d. Have you found to agree with the Bible, the doctrine three times repeated in the Athanasian creed, (which is acknowledged as belonging to our standards) that the man who does not believe every thing asserted in that creed, shall, without doubt, perish everlastingly? (See Constitution, p. 145, 146, 147.) 4th. Have you examined the 34th article in the Confession of Faith, and have you noticed that the shedding of Christ's blood, for the infants of believers, is there assumed, as the ground of their right to baptism? Do you believe this to agree with the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures? If so, do you not see, that it inevitably leads you into the scheme of universal salvation, or unlimited atonement? And do you believe the scriptures assert the doctrine, stated in the answer to the 37th question of the Heidelberg Cate-

chism, and in the 6th article, under the second head of the canons, in the first of which it is declared, that Christ sustained the wrath of God, against the sins of all mankind ; and in the latter, it is maintained, that it is not owing to any defect or insufficiency in the sacrifice offered by Christ upon the cross, that many who are called by the Gospel, perish in unbelief, but that it is wholly their own fault. 5th. Have you examined the 36th article of the Confession of Faith, and have you noticed the doctrine plainly avowed in it, that God hath invested the civil magistracy *with the sword* ; and that their office is to prevent, and extirpate, all idolatry and false worship, and to destroy the kingdom of antichrist ? Do you believe this to accord fully with the word of God ? You shall not escape this inquiry, by alleging that this article was intended to express the duty of a magistrate in Holland, and not in this country. 1. Because it is absurd to suppose, that the Church in America, should ordain what is the duty of the magistrates in Holland, and should bind our ministers to teach and defend the doctrine on pain of deposition. 2. Suppose the article to be intended to declare the duty of the magistrate in Holland, does it agree with the Bible ? Do the scriptures make it the duty of the magistrates there, to extirpate idolatry and false worship, and destroy the kingdom of antichrist ? 3. If it does, does it teach a different doctrine here, and so impose contrary duties on magistrates in different countries, in regard to the interests of his kingdom ?

Thus have I particularized to the members of the Board a few points of doctrine, which it may be suspected they have but partially and slightly looked at, or they would not speak with such confidence of the accordance of every point of doctrine in our standards with the holy scriptures ; nor assert so stoutly the *perfect entirety* of the standards, so that the subtraction of a word as effectually mars their beauty and excellence, as the slightest crack destroys the entirety and safety of an egg. And thus has been taken away the last and only remaining pretence set up by the Board for deciding the case of Mr. Van Dyck upon fallible human standards, instead of adjudging it upon the principles of the unerring word of God.

SECTION VIII.

Crimes or errors of the Board.—Perversion of the standards, requiring of the student more than they themselves believe or perform.—The folly of the notion of the entirety of the standards exposed —Neglect of the duty of Christian forbearance. Origin of intolerance in protestant churches.—Conclusion.—Reasons why the writer does not withdraw from the church.—Answer to the charge of maintaining the same sentiments with infidels and heretics. —Exhortation to the Board—to the ministers of the church, &c.

“You say and do not. For you bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders, but you yourselves will not move them with one of your fingers.” Matt. xxiii. 3, 4.

THERE is yet one more view to be taken of the misconduct of the Board of Superintendants. Assuming every article in the standards of the church to be infallibly correct, they allege there was no room for the exercise of discretion, so as to dispense with the assent of Mr. Van Dyck to every point of doctrine contained in them. As this is a question arising on the institutions of men, it will not be irrelevant to look at the practice of the presbyterian church, which has substantially the same articles with ours. It is stated, as is believed, on good authority, that when the Westminster confession and catechism were received by the presbyterian church in this country, and adopted by a synodical act in 1729, it was with the proviso, that “in case any minister or candidate shall have any scruple with respect to any article or articles of such confession, he shall at the time of making such declaration, declare his scruples to the synod or presbytery, who shall notwithstanding admit him to the exercise of the ministry, if the synod or presbytery shall judge his scruples not essential or necessary in doctrine, worship, or government.” The good sense of that synod led them to adopt the only course which.

so long as human creeds are retained in the church, is at all tolerable, so as to maintain uniformity of doctrine in substance, and at the same time allow to the minister or candidate his undoubted liberty of conscience. Dr. Miller in his lecture on creeds and confessions, to avoid the force of the argument employed against them, that the enforcement of the articles will drive away some of the best men from the church, maintains the same principle with that expressed in the above proviso, thus insisting that a man need not be driven from the presbyterian church, for differences "on minor points." And without the least doubt, there have been frequent instances in our own classes where applicants have been licensed, notwithstanding their dissent from individual articles or points of doctrine, declared at the time, and not deemed essential; but as these declarations of dissent are not matters of record on the minutes of classes, it is not in my power to adduce evidence of the fact. There *must be* such a discretionary power, otherwise this consequence follows:—a man of the best character, understanding, and qualifications, on doubting any one point of doctrine, would not only be rejected from our church, but might be silenced for ever, as it does not follow that he could find any church with which he could agree as nearly as with ours; and if it be right for us to reject him for doubting on one point in our standards, it is right in every other church to reject him for a single doubt as to their articles. And thus, if St. Paul should revisit the earth, he might be disowned and rejected by every church in Christendom; for we are far from being assured that he would not find some erroneous or doubtful doctrine in every church which has adopted any other standard of faith than the Bible itself. And now I appeal to the conscience of every member of the Board, whether there is not *one* article in our standards which he disbelieves, and whether there are not several on which he entertains doubts. If this be not so, it is matter of great wonder, (and must be pronounced grossly criminal,) that some neglect to teach and defend several of the doctrines contained in our articles, contrary to their solemn covenant entered into at their ordination; that many refuse to preach

regularly from the Heidelberg catechism, which they are required to do by the standards and in their calls ; that scarcely any conform to the rules of the church in regard to the proper subjects of infant baptism ; that all have their several exceptions and reservations *in matters of practice*. The only charitable reason that can be given is, that *they differ in matters of faith*, otherwise there could not be so many, and such wide differences in the *practice* of our ministers. Yet it is seriously contended that such is the *entirety* of our standards, that when a student is examined for licensure, one objection or one doubt on an article of faith, must as effectually exclude him from the ministry, as if he disbelieved the whole. And one of the members of the Board, for the purpose of vindicating their conduct in the rejection of Mr. Van Dyck, has written a whole pamphlet, (the one under the signature of Q) in which the great object is to place this subject on mathematical principles, insisting on the simple axiom, that the whole is made up of its parts, and that therefore a subscription to the whole is a subscription to all the parts. And this he declares to be his whole system ; and thence he argues, that Mr. Van Dyck when he declared his willingness to subscribe the standards as a whole or as a system, “ must have been initiated into the mysteries of the modern morality, to the rejection of *old fashioned honesty* and plain dealing.” The ingenious mathematician will excuse me for *dealing plainly* with him. You are an ordained minister, and have of course subscribed our standards *as a whole*, including all its parts. You then declared your belief in every article or point of doctrine, and made no written or parol exception. By your subscription you agreed to teach and defend every article and point of doctrine ; for the obligation to teach and defend is co-extensive with the declaration of belief. Do you in point of fact teach and defend all the parts of the confession, catechism, and canons ? How do you teach the 36th article of the confession ? (see constitution, page 40.) Do you teach that it is the duty of the civil magistrate to employ the sword to extirpate idolatry and false worship, and destroy the kingdom of antichrist ? You may exert all your ingenuity to put a different construction on the arti-

cle, but it will not avail you : it is too plain to admit of a double sense being put upon it by all the speculations of your mathematical genius. Now I demand of you, whether at the time of your subscription you believed it to be the duty of the magistrate to extirpate false worship by dint of the sword ? It so, have you taught and defended the doctrine, since your ordination ? No, sir ; you neither believed the doctrine, when you subscribed, nor have you taught or defended it since. Now read your sentence from your own mouth. “ My system,” say you, “ stands upon an eternal basis.” “ Beyond this I cannot go : any reasonings which go to show that the whole of a thing does not include all its parts, or that *yes* partly means *no*, are entirely beyond my comprehension. They must be the reasonings of a higher order of beings, and in the systems which belong to such, they may be true. It is a matter about which the weaker and more old fashioned brethren know nothing.” Well then, when you affixed your subscription to the 36th article, you said yes to it with your pen, when your judgment said no. When you promised to teach it, you intended not to teach it. When you was asked to defend the doctrine, your mouth said yes, and your judgment and purpose said no. When you said yes to the whole of the articles as a system, *your yes partly said no*. You complain of Mr. Van Dyck’s modern morality in professing to agree to the standards as a whole, while he doubted as to part. What is the difference between your morality and his ? According to your own premises, he was willing to say yes, with the exception of certain specified points, on which he openly declared his doubts. You said unequivocally yes, without explanation, when you disbelieved a part of what you subscribed. When you made a solemn promise, without reserve, to teach and defend a certain doctrine, you knew neither could be done consistently with the truth. Which of you pursued the path of honesty and plain dealing ? And whose conduct, his or yours, will stand the scrutiny of that day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, and when false ethics will no more blind the eyes of mortals ?

Let me now address myself to the other members of the Board, for I have quite done with "old-fashioned brother," Q. Answer me, whether you subscribed the 36th article, "*ex animo*?" Then you intended to approve the deposition of the Remonstrants, and their banishment; the imprisonment of Grotius, and the execution of Barnevelt; and all the persecutions consequent on the proceedings of the Synod of Dort. If you subscribed that article *ex animo*, you are now bound by solemn engagements to teach and defend it, and of course to inculcate upon our magistrates the "*important doctrine*," that they are bound, even from the president of the United States to the justice of the peace, each to whet his sword, and employ all their power to extirpate the false worship of Arians, Socinians, and Anabaptists; to destroy and suppress Arminianism, condemned with so much bitterness in our standards; then the peaceful Quakers too, whose consumption, by the combined power of Brownleeism and Hicksism, goes on too slow, will be despatched by a single stroke with the sharp sword of the civil magistrate, brought fully into the views of the synod of Dort.

Or will you admit that you disbelieve the doctrine contained in the 36th article, and that you have neither taught nor defended it? I know you will. Then you now declare *ex animo* that when you professed to subscribe the articles *ex animo*, you assented to what you did not believe, and promised what you resolved not to perform. This Mr. Van Dyck would not do; and for his lack of pliability was rejected. Now let me ask you seriously, whether this your last pretence to justify your proceedings, namely, the entirety of the standards, is not too futile to require a further answer.

It is clear as the sun, that there must be a discretionary dispensing power, or you run into the greatest absurdities and wickedness. *If the rules of the church* require the maintenance of the entirety of the standards in the sense which is advocated by the Board, those rules themselves are wrong, inconsistent with the principles of the word of God, and therefore not binding on you as members of the Board, nor can you take refuge under them. You find it necessary, as ministers

of the gospel, to forbear with your parishioners in their ignorance, unbelief, and erroneous opinions ; you find it needful, in your intercourse with your fellow-ministers, or sitting in the capacity of a member of classis, particular or general Synod, to exercise forbearance towards your fellow-ministers, for their differences from you in faith and practice. You have deemed it right, no doubt, to wink at the attack publicly made by the editor of the Magazine of the Reformed Dutch Church, on one of our articles of faith. You do not feel the necessity of deposing ministers for not preaching the Heidelberg catechism, or not observing the rules of the church in regard to infant baptism, or for neglecting to teach and defend the 36th article, and enforcing its principles on the civil magistrates in this country. You are fully aware of the necessity of asking the forbearance of your fellow-ministers for your own differences in opinion and practice from theirs. You are not ignorant of the forbearance of God with the unbelief of his servant Moses, and commissioning him, notwithstanding, to lead his people from Egyptian bondage to the land of liberty and promise. You have seen the long suffering of Christ with his unbelieving disciples, and his licensing them to preach the gospel, notwithstanding their “ *difficulties on several important doctrines,*” so that they could not have subscribed to what even the Prophets taught. You know the duty of forbearance to be inculcated again and again, by the *theological* Paul, and that not only as to matters of practice, but as to matters of faith. See Rom. xiv.; and yet, when you act as a Board of Superintendants, all these considerations are of no moment—the rules of the church must be abused and made the pretext of setting aside the paramount authority of the word of God—then you cannot exercise forbearance towards a worthy, pious, devoted young brother, who differed from you only on a few unessential matters, and on which he is as likely to be adjudged correct as you are, at the great day of account, when you shall stand with him before the righteous tribunal of the omniscient God,—when every prejudice which now blinds the understanding, shall be dissipated—when the rules of the church will no longer be pleaded as an excuse for

setting at nought the word of God—when the spirit of intolerance will no longer be sustained by the multitudes that help to keep each other in countenance here below, and to drown the cry of persecuted innocence—when the sin and folly of attempting to lord it over the consciences of our fellow-men, will be most evident—when every slumbering conscience will be awakened to the awful responsibility of rejecting from the ministry of reconciliation a young man, whom, if you would but have given heed to the scriptures of truth, you must have known would have been licensed by Him who will then be your Judge. Had you but opened your eyes to the light of God's word, you must have seen that Christ licensed his disciples to preach, although they *disbelieved* what *he knew to be true* doctrines; and you would not have rejected your student for *doubting* doctrines which you *do not know* to be true, and which you believed, not so much on your own conviction, as on the authority of the church: you would have seen that Christ licensed his disciples, notwithstanding their *disbelief* of what *he positively declared* to be true; and you would not have cut off your young brother for *doubting* propositions which, if declared at all, are “*not explicitly and evidently revealed*;” you would have seen that the disciples had no reason for their unbelief, except their inveterate prejudices and the perverseness of human depravity, while your student had, on his side, not merely the doubts, but the positive opinions of some of the best men in the church of God.

The history of this persecution, and the discussion of the reasons upon which it is attempted to be justified, have now been brought to a close. And while we are constrained to express unfeigned sorrow that such things should be in this protestant church, and in this land of freedom, it may be more useful to trace the origin of the intolerant spirit which has originated the persecution and carried it into effect.

The intolerance existing in the church arises from setting too high a value on *doctrinal*, compared with *practical*, knowledge. For the last two hundred years, the great concern has been to detect and root out heterodox opinions, and establish orthodoxy in matters of speculative faith. To effect this

object, it was deemed necessary to draw up creeds and confessions of faith, professedly extracted from the word of God, but clothed in such language as, to all but the denomination that drew them up, conveyed a meaning different from that expressed in the holy Scriptures. By the establishment of a particular sect in any country, through the power of the civil government, unanimity to a great degree was ensured; and by the consciousness of numbers embracing the same opinions, the dominant party became too confident of the correctness of their religious sentiments, and intolerant of the opinions of their opponents. The least deviation from the acknowledged standards, by members of their own church, was dreaded as the precursor of open apostacy to the opposite faith; and thus, unessential, nay, trifling, differences have been magnified into matters of great importance. Almost the only means employed by the church for promoting the interests of Christ's kingdom, have been to maintain, in her congregations, a correct theoretical faith. This secured, and it was believed that every formidable evil was shut out. Hence the great inquiry in regard to the qualifications of a minister has been, is he orthodox in his creed? The great importance attached to theoretical points of doctrine has diverted the exertions of the Christian world from their proper direction. The principles of the Reformation, if they had only been persevered in and carried on, would, before this time, have dislodged Satan from the usurped empire of the world. The gospel would long since have been preached to every creature, instead of the world's remaining to this day, as to the greatest portion of it, in the darkness of Paganism. The benevolent and glorious charities now in their infancy, would have attained to a mature and blessed manhood; and fields of moral enterprise, not yet explored, would now have been occupied and successfully cultivated. How much more noble, how far exalted above her present station in the world, would have been the Church of God at this day, if her professed friends had not directed so much of their energies to unprofitable speculation and controversy!

In coming to a conclusion of my remarks, it may not be amiss to answer a question, which has doubtless occurred to some of my readers; namely: If there are such evils in the Church of my fathers, why do I still maintain my connexion with it? It is scarcely possible, at this day, to point out the least error in theory or practice in the Church, but that person must hear the remark, "Let those who do not like our doctrines and practices, go to some other church, which they love better, for we compel no man to remain with us." This is generally the language of passion; but it is also the language of ignorance. Were it my desire to retire from the Church in which I have been born, baptized, and enjoyed many privileges, it is not permitted me, unless on the previous commission of some crime, which would subject me to, and effect my excommunication. It has been solemnly decided, by the general Synod, in the year 1824, "That it is an established principle in church government, that the relation existing between the church and its members, can be dissolved only by death, dismission, or an act of discipline." The dismission would not be granted me, did I request it on the ground of the evils existing in the church, for I should be immediately brought under a course of discipline for the avowal. This is my first answer. The next is, that it is not my wish to withdraw. There is no church, within my knowledge, which is exempt from error in doctrine or practice; that is, according to the best of my own judgment. Another answer is, that the evils in my own church may possibly be corrected; and even if they should not, they are not such as to prevent me, with the exercise of Christian forbearance, from deriving more profit to myself and my children by my continuance in the church, than by withdrawing from it. Lastly, If there be a single talent committed to me, by my Master, whom I, although a layman, profess to serve, the prospect of my employing it to some good purpose, is better, by my remaining in the church of my fathers, than by retiring, or betaking myself to another. But has it come to this, that as soon as a man discovers something wrong in his church, he is not only at liberty, but in duty bound to forsake it? Then it is also the duty of the patriot,

who perceives evidence of misrule in the government of his country, instead of using his endeavours to reform what is amiss, to forsake the land of his birth, and transfer his allegiance to a country of strangers.

There is another misconception which it may be useful to correct. In maintaining the doctrines of liberty of conscience, and the sufficiency of the Bible as the standard of faith and practice, I shall be classed with infidels, unitarians, and other heretics, who severally advocate the one or the other of the same doctrines. If the *reproach* of this charge were the whole extent of the evil, it would not be worth my concern, or that of the reader. The danger is, that it will be employed as a mean to close the ears of some against the hearing of the truth, and the understandings of others against its reception. This would be both unfair, and prejudicial to the cause of correct principles. If errorists do advance some truths, that surely does not metamorphose them into untruths. The correctness, or incorrectness of religious sentiments, must be tested, not by inquiring who are the men that advocate them, but by comparing them with the unerring word of God. Besides, if the enemies of religion make use of true doctrines to pervert them to the purpose of undermining the Christian faith, must the friends of religion, for that reason, desist from maintaining the same truths, when they may use them for the establishment of the faith? It is impossible to calculate the loss which has been sustained by the church, in adopting the contrary course, and thus being caught in the very snare of the enemy. When Paine published his "Age of Reason," some well meaning divines undertook to answer him, by decrying human reason, instead of refuting his sophisms, by making use of their reason; a most unfortunate mistake, truly, and one which gave the enemy a decided advantage. And now, when infidels and unitarians are loud in their claims for the liberty of conscience, and the latter preach up liberality and christian forbearance, and the superiority of the Bible over creeds of human composition, it is supposed that we must either be silent, or take the opposite side. *It is surely not the time, when error abounds, to shut our ears against the truth.*

The members of the Board, I exhort to repent and seek forgiveness, for having, under the colour of zeal for the truth, permitted themselves to be influenced by the spirit of party; for refusing to exercise forbearance towards their young brother, as became them under a sense of their own short comings, and the precepts of God's holy word; for having, under the colour of ecclesiastical authority, endeavoured to coerce a student of divinity to subscribe to human opinions, which, in his conscience, he could not see to accord with the scriptures of truth; and on his refusal, following him with furious persecution to the utmost extent of their power; for having preferred the institutions of men to the ordinances of God; for exalting human standards above the infallible word of God; for having rejected from the ministry of the Gospel, in our church, a young man who would have been admitted by the Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles; and for having exerted all their power, industry, and skill, to prevent him from preaching the Gospel in any church of God.

To the ministers of the Gospel in the church of my fathers, permit me, as one who thinks he desires the prosperity of that church, to recommend the cultivation and promotion of the spirit of peace and forbearance. In preaching and inculcating the truths of the Bible, give to matters of practice, and matters of mere theoretical belief, the weight which their relative importance demands, as inculcated in the scriptures. Let me beseech you, not to encourage the boastings that have been so long heard, of the superiority of our churches, of our standards, of our congregations over all others. Instead of thus fostering the pride, rather inculcate humility on your people, as a most needful, most ornamental, most valuable grace. Give no countenance to the elevation of human standards of truth, but exalt the word of God as the only and the sufficient standard. Promote the spirit of liberality. Convince the world that it is a calumny, that in the sheepfold of Christ it is needful to raise high and make strong the walls of separation, lest the sheep bite, tear, and devour one another. Permit me to entreat you, to use your utmost endeavours to establish infant schools wherever they can be supported; to establish sabbath-

schools and Bible classes wherever ten learners may be brought together ; to encourage every liberal and pious object, not upon sectarian principles, but from a love to the kingdom of Christ ; to be constantly devising liberal things, and enlist the energies of your people to execute them. Let me, in the utmost earnestness of my soul, beseech you, to insist more with your hearers on the prayerful reading and searching of the holy scriptures ; and finally, strive to promote the practice of godliness in all things. And the use of these means may be found, yea they *will* be found, to be the best means for ensuring unanimity of religious opinions, and uniformity of christian practice in things essential, and the prevalence of the spirit of forbearance and christian love in regard to matters of minor importance.

Of the *members of our church*, I must be permitted to inquire, whether the facts and reasons detailed in the foregoing pages do not help to solve the question frequently asked, why our theological school, maintained at so great an expense, has not flourished according to the desires and hopes of its supporters ? why it has cost so much, and, of late years, effected comparatively so little ? why our missions have not prospered in proportion to the funds employed ? Can the school prosper when it is based on human standards, rather than on the unerring word of God ? When the students are trained with the view of preparing them to promote sect and party, instead of being directed to have a single eye to the building up of Christ's kingdom ? When their faith is attempted to be coerced, or made to rest more on the authority of the church, than on their own convictions of the meaning of the Scriptures ? Let us not be cheated out of our reason, by being told, that all other schools of theology do the same. If that be true, they all do wrong. Our present business is with our own school. Whatever is amiss in that ought to be reformed. Uncommon exertions made on sectarian principles to increase the number of students, will not ensure reformation in the management of the school ; nay, the greater the success in the increase of numbers, the more surely will bigotry attribute to her principles and course of conduct, the attainment of this success.

and the more will she be strengthened in her former course ; and in the same proportion will the energies of the church be diverted from the promotion of a Christian spirit, and the practice of godliness. How is a reformation to be effected? *Public sentiment* may do it ; and if our ministers dare not expose themselves to the reproach and the danger, the duty devolves on us, as lay members of the church, to give the tone to public sentiment. Let me entreat you to reflect on these subjects ; and when your opinions are matured, do not shrink from declaring them, nor from acting according to your convictions.

Upon Christians of all denominations, let me urge the necessity of an union of all the friends of the Bible, to combine their exertions in restoring that precious volume to the estimation in which it ought to be held—of its supremacy, its infallibility, and its sufficiency, as the rule of faith and practice ; and the necessity of united exertions to remove out of the way every false standard and false dependence, and every thing calculated to seduce men to adopt any other rule of judgment or conduct, than what is authorized in the holy word of God.

APPENDIX.

DOCUMENT MARKED A.

My views as to certain points in theology are the following :

1. The eternal generation of the Son of God, and the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, which are asserted Heid. Cat. Q. 33, and Confes. of Faith, articles 10th and 13th.

Neither of these doctrines do I deny ; yet I cannot say that, from rational conviction, I believe either that Jesus Christ is the natural Son of God, or that the procession of the Holy Spirit is either eternal or natural. *Want of proof*, rather than opposite proof, is the reason why I hesitate to receive them. While therefore I believe from Prov. viii. 23, 24, &c. that both as to existence and mediatorship, Jesus Christ is eternal, I cannot venture to determine, but would rather be silent as to them, whether the terms Son and procession denote a *natural* or *official* relation.

2. The doctrines of imputation and substitution, I believe.

3. I adopt the distinction of natural and moral inability which is made by many divines, as essential to a correct explanation of man's inability to perform his duty ; but by it I do not mean that man is not corrupt, which is the sense in which Pelagians say that man can perform his duty. Nor do I maintain that man ever does perform his duty without the assistance of divine grace ; but with Hopkinsians, I believe in the necessity of that grace, as being an invariable antecedent cause of such obedience. Man can obey God's commands, when disposed to their obedience ; but because of the depravity of his heart he never is so disposed, until the Holy Spirit imparts his grace. I can subscribe on this point the 8th and 9th answers in the catechism, if the 9th be explained by the 8th.

4. As to the doctrine of the atonement : I view the gospel offer of salvation on the terms of repentance of sin, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as universal ; and since on account of the denunciations of divine justice, such an offer could be made to *no one* without an atonement, so I conceive that that offer cannot be made to *every one*, on account of the requirements of the same divine justice, without an atonement for all. When I use the word atonement, I mean by it here, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now I do not say that divine justice is absolutely satisfied by

Christ's dying for them, so that it ceases to demand punishment from the impenitent and unbelieving non-elect; indeed in that sense it is not satisfied even in regard to the impenitent and unbelieving elect, so long as they continue so; but I mean to say that divine justice is so affected (I know not how) by his death in their behalf, that the offer of salvation can be made to them consistently with it, which, had not Christ died for them, could not. I wish I could be more explicit, but I cannot: beyond this my views are not clear. I know not whether I should differ from those who maintain the *sufficiency of the atonement*. At any rate the above is the only sense in my view in which the atonement can be actually sufficient, if we would avoid universal salvation. Before I leave this head I would state, that in particular redemption I firmly believe, that through Christ's death the elect, and the elect alone, obtain justification; and that if the word atonement itself be understood as including justification, or as inseparably preceding it; in short, if any thing more than the rendering it consistent with God's perfections, to save the sinner on his repentance and faith, be understood by it, I reject the universality of the atonement. On no other doctrines, which separate churches or bodies, are my views different either from the acknowledged standards or ministers of our church.

(Signed)

L. B. VAN DYCK.

As I have explained my meaning as to Christ's having died for all, I can subscribe the answer to the 37th Q. of the Heidelberg Catechism.

DOCUMENT MARKED B.

1. As to the doctrines of the eternal generation of the Son, and procession of the Holy Ghost, I am undecided. I do not disbelieve them, and yet I cannot say that I am fully convinced of their truth. I believe, however, that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost are divine; and that between the persons designated by those names, there is a distinction, and that it is not merely nominal but real; but what the nature of that distinction is, in other words in what it consists, and whether the terms Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, do or do not point to the nature of that distinction, I do not know.

2. The doctrines of imputation and substitution, I believe.

3. I agree with those who distinguish inability in general, into natural and moral, and believe that of the sinner to perform his duty to be the latter.

4. I am not settled on the subject of the atonement, but hesitate between the views of Hopkinsian and Calvinistic divines.

L. B. VAN DYCK.

New-Brunswick, July 7th, 1827.

Extract from the Minutes of the Board of Superintendants of the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Dutch Church, at their meeting in New-Brunswick, July 11th, 1827.

"The following report was received from the Rev. Professor Milledoler, accompanied with the documents marked A. and B.

"Mr. Leonard B. Van Dyck, of the senior class, presented to me a paper on the 29th of June, purporting to contain some doctrines on which his views differ from the acknowledged standards and ministers of our church: a copy of this marked A. is subjoined. Apprehending that this document would be submitted to the Board of Superintendants, Mr. Van Dyck called upon me on the 5th instant, to request the original, that he might examine and remodify it. I gave it him under the full impression of a loan, and that it would certainly be restored to me. Mr. Van Dyck, however, has since declined to return it, and has presented in its place a substitute under date of July 7th, marked B. Having understood that this young gentleman contemplates leaving New-Brunswick without submitting to examination, and being desirous to avoid all misapprehension, and to put the Board in possession of at least some of the facts which have transpired in his case, I have deemed it my duty to present both documents to the Board.

All which is respectfully submitted.

PH. MILLEDOLER.

New-Brunswick, July 11th, 1827.

"*Resolved*, That so much of the report of the Professor of didactic and polemic theology, as relates to the case of Mr. Van Dyck, be referred to a special committee, consisting of the Rev. Messrs. C. D. Westbrook, N. I. Marselus, and P. Labagh.

"The committee on the case of Mr. Van Dyck reported, and their report was adopted, and is as follows:

"The committee on the case of the student, L. B. Van Dyck, report—

"That they have conferred with Professor Milledoler, and the student, L. B. Van Dyck, and have learned with pleasure that the deportment of the young man has been, throughout his theological course, respectful and exemplary; that the young man conducted himself before the committee with decorum, with candour, and with affection. That although upon the explanation of the standards of our church, given by the committee on the subject of his doubts, he was in some measure relieved, so far as to be able to retract some expressions in his written statements; yet he retained his doubts on the eternal generation of the Son, and of the eternal procession of the Spirit; and was not sufficiently explicit on the atonement: that he wishes to be admitted to his examination with his class, and submit to the investigation and decision of the Board of Superintendants.

"Your committee are aware of the caution and discretion which should be exercised in the reception of candidates for the ministry, especially when the developement of facts suggest them. Yet upon due consideration of the modest and affectionate conduct of their young brother, your committee can see no weighty reason why he should not be admitted to his examination, and why the whole subject should not be left to the discretion of the Board.

All which is respectfully submitted.

By ORDER. C. D. WESTBROOK, *Chairman.*"

The Board then proceeded to the examination of the different classes. The examination being finished, the following resolution was passed :

"*Resolved*, That Mr. Van Dyck be called before this Board, and asked whether he has any remarks or explanations to make on the papers which contain his views and difficulties on certain points of doctrine, as maintained by the Reformed Dutch Church, and whether he is prepared to subscribe, *ex animo*, the standards of the church.

"Mr. Van Dyck appeared before the Board, and stated that the last paper handed in by him to Dr. Milledoler, expressed fully his views. The xth and xith articles of the Confession of Faith, the xiiith Lord's day of the Heidelberg Catechism, and the viith article of the second head of doctrine, were read to him, and the question was asked whether he could subscribe these articles of faith. To which he answered that he could not receive the whole of the xth and xith articles of the Confession of Faith, and the xiiith Lord's day of the catechism, but that he could subscribe the viith article of the second head of doctrine. He moreover stated that the inability of man was only moral, and that he applied the corruption of human nature to the understanding and affections, as well as to the will.

"*Resolved*, That the Rev. Messrs. S. A. Van Vranken, C. C. Cuyler, and B. C. Taylor, be a committee to draft a minute on the case of Mr. L. B. Van Dyck.

The committee reported the following resolutions, which were adopted :

1. *Whereas* Mr. L. B. Van Dyck labours on several important doctrines, so that he cannot subscribe to the entire standards of the church: Therefore, *Resolved*, That he cannot be recommended by this Board to the Professors for their certificates—but

2. *Whereas* he has given a high degree of satisfaction to the Board, by the praiseworthy candour manifested on the topics on which his mind is not settled, and the attention paid to his studies: *And whereas* it is regarded as exceedingly desirable, that the way should be open for his admission into the ministry of our church—therefore,

“ *Resolved*, That he be advised to continue in the institution, and pay a particular attention to the subjects alluded to.

“ 3. *Resolved*, That should Mr. Van Dyck's mind become settled on the said subjects, and he desire to be heard again, that in that case the president of the Board be authorized to call a special meeting for the purpose of attending to his case.

S. A. VAN VRANKEN, *Chairman*.

“ *Resolved*, That the stated clerk furnish Mr. Van Dyck with a copy of the above resolutions.”

“ An extra meeting of the Board of Superintendents was held in the city of New-York, on Thursday, November 1st, 1827.

“ The president stated, that he had called the meeting in accordance with the request contained in the following letter from three members of the Board.

New York, September 28th, 1827.

Rev. James V. C. Romeyn, President of the Board of Superintendents of the Theological Seminary.

“ Whereas at the last meeting of the Board of Superintendents, the student, Leonard B. Van Dyck, was, upon examination, declared to be not entitled to a professoral certificate for licensure : and, whereas, the said board did resolve, that as soon as the said L. B. Van Dyck could subscribe the articles of faith, and the canons of the Reformed Dutch Church, the Board woul meet, in special session, and admit him to be entitled to the professoral certificate : and whereas, the said L. B. Van Dyck, has not only declared himself ready to subscribe said articles, but has offered himself to a presbytery of the Presbyterian church, and has been by them received as a licentiate : Therefore we, the subscribers, request you to call a meeting of the said board, to convene in the city of New-York, (if this be admissible,) or if not, in New-Brunswick, at such a time as you may judge proper, immediately after the expiration of the time in which notices of this kind must be given, to take into consideration the case of the said Leonard B. Van Dyck, and all such subjects as are connected with it.

CORNELIUS D. WESTBROOK,
JACOB BRODHEAD,
WILLIAM C. BROWNLEE.”

The minutes of the Board on the case of Mr. Van Dyck, at their session in New-Brunswick were read.

The subject was discussed at considerable length, when it was, on motion, *Resolved*, That the consideration of the whole case before the Board, be referred to a special committee, consisting of

the Rev. Messrs. Dr. Brownlee, C. D. Westbrook, S. A. Van Vranken, and P. Labagh.

The stated clerk laid before the Board a written request, which he had received from Mr. L. B. Van Dyck, for an attested copy of all the proceedings of the Board in his case: Whereupon it was *Resolved*, That his request be complied with.

The committee on the case of Mr. L. B. Van Dyck, reported, and their report was amended, adopted, and is as follows :

"The committee to whom was referred the case of Mr. L. B. Van Dyck, recommend to the Board, the adoption of the following resolutions :

"*Resolved*, That the student, Mr. Leonard B. Van Dyck, is still considered by this Board as under their superintendence and care, he never having been dismissed by certificate; but, on the contrary, having been advised by this Board to remain in the Theological Seminary, until his mind should be finally settled and made correct, on those different points on which he has difficulties.

2. *Resolved*, That Mr. Van Dyck, having, without a regular dismissal, and contrary to the advice and instructions of this Board, presented himself before the Presbytery of Columbia, and having taken license to preach the gospel; has acted, in a manner, disorderly and unchristianlike.

3. *Resolved*, That the Presbytery of Columbia, in licensing Mr. Van Dyck, without any certificate of dismissal and recommendation, from the Superintendants of the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Dutch Church, has violated the second and fifth articles of correspondence between the Reformed Dutch Church and the Presbyterian Church: Therefore,

4. *Resolved*, That this Board deem it highly improper and unsafe that Mr. Van Dyck be allowed to officiate in any of our churches.

5. *Resolved*, That a copy of these resolutions be sent to the Rev. the Moderator of the Presbytery of Columbia.

6. *Resolved*, That measures be taken by this Board, to bring this business before the General Synod of the Reformed Dutch Church, and before the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, unless the Presbytery of Columbia rescind their proceedings in the case of Mr. Van Dyck, and within three months duly advise the President of this Board that they have so done.

7. *Resolved*, That these resolutions be made known in a circular address to our churches.

"All which is respectfully submitted,

"W. C. BROWNLEE, *Chairman*.

"*Resolved*, That the President and Secretary of this Board be authorized to draw up and issue the circular above referred to.

"*Resolved*. That the stated Clerk be authorized to prepare a

copy of the whole proceedings of this meeting, to be laid before the General Synod.

"A true extract from the Minutes of the Board of Superintendants of the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Dutch Church.

"Attest. THOMAS M. STRONG, *Stated Clerk.*"

Extract from the Minutes of an extra Syond of the Reformed Dutch Church, held in the city of Albany, on the 23d day of April, 1828.

"The Committee on the case of Mr. Leonard B. Van Dyck, report the following recitals and resolutions for the adoption of the General Synod.

"Whereas, the Board of Superintendants of the Theological School of the Reformed Dutch Church is, according to the plan of that institution, subject to the supervision of the General Synod, and therefore accountable to Synod for all its measures, it behooves the Board, in every case of doubt or difficulty, to report the same to the General Synod, for advice and ultimate decision: and whereas it appears from the Report of the Board of Superintendants to this Synod, that, at the examination of the students in the aforesaid school, who had completed their theological course of study, Mr. Leonard B. Van Dyck, one of the said students, was regularly examined, and exhibited satisfactory evidence that his attainments in theological knowledge entitled him to a professoral certificate, to be admitted to an examination before the classis, to which he was attached for licensure; but that he entertained doubts relative to certain standing articles of faith of the Reformed Dutch Church, by reason whereof, the said Board of Superintendants considered it their duty to withhold from him the said professoral certificate, until his said doubts should be removed; and to that end advised him to continue in the institution, and pay particular attention to the points upon which he doubted, and accompanying that advice by a resolution, that should Mr. Van Dyck's mind become settled upon the said points, the President of the said Board was authorized upon his request, to call a special meeting of the Board, to attend to his case, as by reference to so much of the said report, as relates to Mr. Van Dyck's doubts, and the proceedings of the said Board relative thereto, (a copy whereof is hereto annexed,) may more fully appear: Therefore, *Resolved*, That this Synod approve the course pursued by the said Board of Superintendants, in withholding the professoral certificate from Mr. Van Dyck until his aforesaid doubts should be removed, or this Synod should have an opportunity to pass finally upon his case.

"And whereas it further appears, by the report of the said

Superintendants, that Mr. Van Dyck did not conform to their advice, so as aforesaid given to him, but left the said school, and attached himself to the Presbytery of Columbia, in connexion with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church; and that the said Presbytery admitted him to an examination for licensure in the Presbyterian Church, and afterwards licensed him to preach the gospel as a licentiate of the said Church: Therefore, *Resolved*, That certified copies of this and the preceding resolutions, with their recitals, be transmitted to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church for consideration, whether the aforesaid proceedings of the Presbytery of Columbia are conformable to the spirit and true intent of the articles of correspondence entered into by the General Assembly and this Synod, and to adopt such measures in relation thereto, as the General Assembly shall deem proper in view of the circumstances of the case.

“ And whereas it further appears by the aforesaid report, that the Board of Superintendants, at an extra meeting held in November last, passed certain resolutions, and authorized a circular to be addressed to the Dutch Churches, in connexion with this Synod, arraigning the conduct of the Presbytery of Columbia, and menacing an appeal to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church unless the Presbytery of Columbia should within three months rescind their proceedings in the case of Mr. Van Dyck, and advise the President of the said Board of Superintendants thereof, (and admonishing the Dutch Churches not to allow Mr. Van Dyck to officiate in them :) and whereas, the said Board of Superintendants, in their last mentioned resolutions and proceedings, have assumed powers which do not appertain to it, and in relation to matters which fall within the legitimate province of this Synod—Therefore *Resolved*, That this Synod feels constrained, by a just regard to its constitutional duty, as the supreme ecclesiastical judicatory of the Reformed Dutch Church, to disavow the authority so assumed by the said Board of Superintendants, and to express pointedly the disapprobation of this Synod of the last mentioned resolutions and proceedings of the Board of Superintendants.

H. OSTRANDER, *Chairman*.

“ *Resolved*, That a certified copy of the proceedings of this Synod, in the case of Mr. Van Dyck, be transmitted to the Board of Superintendants.”

Extract from the Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, held in May, 1828.

The Committee to whom was committed the communication from the Reformed Dutch Synod, in relation to the proceedings of

the Presbytery of Columbia, in the case of Leonard B. Van Dyck, made a report, which being read and amended, was adopted, and is as follows, viz :—That they have given considerable attention to the subject committed to them, and find the facts to be as follows, viz : That Leonard B. Van Dyck was a student of the Theological school of the Reformed Dutch Church, and attached to a church under the care of the classis of Albany, belonging to the said church ; that because of doubts entertained by him relative to certain standing articles of faith of the Reformed Dutch Church, he was refused a professoral certificate, until his doubts on the points in question should be removed ; and for that purpose he was advised to continue in the institution, and pay particular attention to the points on which he doubted ; that with this advice he did not comply, but offered himself to the Presbytery of Columbia, as a candidate for licensure, and by said presbytery was received and licensed. Such are the facts in the case ; and in these facts your committee are unable to discover any thing, by which the articles of correspondence between this body and an highly respectable sister church have been violated. They are however of the opinion, that as the change of church connexion is a serious matter, calculated to affect the peace of the body left, and therefore not to be needlessly encouraged, that the Presbytery of Columbia did not exercise due deliberation in the reception and licensure of Mr. Van Dyck, and that they would have acted with more propriety, if instead of receiving information from a member of the classis of Albany, and acting upon it, as to Mr. Van Dyck's relation to the judicatories of the Reformed Dutch Church, they had applied to that classis itself."

Remarks on
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